

Dear Members of the Northwestern Community:

In the past few weeks, there has been considerable media coverage concerning predictions of significant outbreaks of the H1N1 virus, more commonly known as Swine Flu. There has been added attention to schools as institutions may act as a “point of spread.” Students, faculty, and staff can easily spread flu to others in their institutions as well as in the larger community. To date, the highest number of cases of 2009 H1N1 flu have been confirmed among people 5–24 years old. They are also at risk of getting seasonal influenza.

While no cases of the H1N1 virus have been reported at Northwestern, cases have been reported at other institutions of higher education in Oklahoma. Nonetheless, we want all members of the Northwestern community to take preventative steps to prevent the spread of illnesses, including H1N1.

Northwestern encourages all students and employees to adhere to the following actions as recommended by the Center for Disease Control:

- If you are sick, stay at home or in your residence until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Students should contact individual faculty members if an illness prevents you from attending class.
- Current Northwestern students who need clinical attention can visit Share Medical Center from Sept. 1 through Dec. 3, on Tuesday and Thursday from 2 to 3 p.m. The office visit is free, but students will be responsible for other costs.
- If you are at a higher risk of complications from the flu, check with your health care provider about options. People at higher risk of flu complications who get sick will benefit from early treatment with antiviral medicines.
- Find out if you should get vaccinated against seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.
- Do not attend institution-sponsored events until you are free of fever for at least 24 hours.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm running water, or use alcohol-based hand cleaners. Cover coughs or sneezes with your elbow or shoulder instead of your hands when a tissue is not available.
- Frequently clean your living quarters or offices. Students living together should frequently clean commonly-used surfaces such as doorknobs, refrigerator handles, remote controls, and countertops.

Student Services can provide you with information on student health services provided in Alva by Share Medical Center. Contact Student Services at 327-8415. Working together, we can help stop the spread of illnesses at Northwestern. Additional information about the H1N1 virus and other forms of influenza is available at www.nwosu.edu/student-health-services

Janet Cunningham, Ed.D.
President