

Dear MumNet members and families,

There is presently much speculation as to the impact that the H1N1 virus will have on Canadians over the next few months. Like other child-focused programs and centers, MumNet considers the safety of its organization to be of the highest priority. We follow all guidelines and protocols set out by the Public Health Agency of Canada, as well as guidelines set out by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada.

We ask if you are not already familiar with the current protocols of Public Health, that you take a moment and read the following information. It's for the safety of everyone that every effort is made to follow the guidelines and recommendations mentioned and it is greatly appreciated by all.

How does the H1N1 virus typically spread?

It is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza. Just like other types of influenzas, the virus can spread through liquid droplets that become airborne from coughing or sneezing. You can also contract it by touching something with the live virus on it and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose. In common with other influenza strains, the virus can live for up to eight hours on most surfaces.

What can we do to prevent the spread of H1N1?

We strongly urge that all MumNet members, their children and families, take the following steps to prevent the spread of H1N1:

1. Frequent hand washing with soap and water is one of the best preventions we can recommend. All MumNet locations have access to soap and water. Parents and caregivers are urged to wash their hands and the hands of their children routinely before and after MumNet.
2. Place hand sanitizer or antibacterial wipes in your child's bag and use them when soap and water are not available.
3. Ensure that all children have their own water/bottles labelled with their name. Sharing water/juice bottles is not permitted.
4. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, rather than your hand, if you are without a tissue.

What steps is MumNet taking?

In line with the Public Health Agency of Canada guidelines, MumNet rooms will continue to be cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis and hand sanitizer made available. We are also urging members to keep their children at home if they are showing any signs on this virus.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Lethargy
- Lack of appetite
- Coughing
- Headaches

Parents are encouraged to take their child to a physician if showing signs or symptoms of the H1N1 virus.

What about immunization for MumNet caregivers?

We cannot require that our caregivers or members receive the H1N1 immunization. This is a personal choice for them as it is for you and your children. At the present time, only those considered in the high risk group are receiving the vaccine. The Public Health Agency of Canada's position is that getting the H1N1 vaccine is the single best way to protect you and those around you from getting the H1N1 flu virus, and its website states that they "remain on target for vaccine to be available for all Canadians who need and want to be immunized by Christmas".

What does the government recommend with respect to group childcare and meetings?

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada offers guidance for organizations in the time of a pandemic. Basically, at this point, we are in a non-emergency situation, whereby privacy laws continue to apply in the usual way. The Metro Mothers Network will continue to focus on "business continuity planning" and communication around appropriate flu-prevention measures. See http://www.priv.gc.ca/information/pub/gd_pan_20091028_e.cfm for more information.

H1N1 resources and where to find more information

Information on H1N1, as well as a chart that may assist you in considering your options about vaccination, can be found on the Public Health Agency of Canada's website at www.fightflu.ca. Further information you could post in your childcare rooms is attached.

Questions?

If you have questions about H1N1 and your MumNet group, we suggest that you talk to your group Childcare Representative and your group Leaders. For questions about the health and safety regulations that govern the operation of MumNet and our childcare rooms, please contact Sandra Hickey, MumNet Childcare Manager, by email at fshickey@sympatico.ca.

It is important that we keep perspective and take the necessary precautions to keep all families safe at MumNet. Thank you for your assistance.
Stay healthy!

Kerri Torrey, Board President (mayortorrey@sympatico.ca)

The Board of Directors, Metro Mothers Network