



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Back to the Basics: Wash Your Hands and Stay Home If You're Sick**

HOWELL, Michigan (September 29, 2009) (Livingston County Department of Public Health)

As flu seasons draws nearer, Livingston County EMS and Department of Public Health (LCDPH), St. Joseph Mercy Livingston Hospital (SJML) and the Livingston County Red Cross are working to remind people that there are many ways to help protect ourselves and each other from getting sick.

“We are encouraging everyone to get a seasonal flu shot now and an H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available,” explains Dr. Cheryl Wickham, SJML pediatrician “We’re also asking people to stay home if they are ill. But we are also reminding people that proper personal hygiene can be a major defense against the flu.”

A flu virus like H1N1 will spread easily from person to person, mostly through coughing and sneezing. When a sick person coughs or sneezes, people surrounding that person can breathe in droplets that contain the virus. The droplets could land on surfaces people touch with their hands. When these surfaces are touched, the flu virus can enter the body.

“We recommend that everyone get in the habit of washing their hands often and covering their coughs and sneezes with their elbow or a tissue,” explains Dr. Donald Lawrenchuk, Medical Director for the LCDPH. “Another major message we’re sharing with families and employers is

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for people to stay home if they are sick. These actions can help us stay healthy now and these precautions also may help protect us and our families during a flu outbreak.”

If I get the flu, how can I take care of myself or my child?

- Stay home until you are symptom-free without using fever-lowering medicine (like Tylenol) for 24 hours.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep hydrated.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your arm at the elbow.
- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school

If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

Warning signs in adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Warning signs in children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

Not everyone with flu symptoms will be tested for H1N1. The CDC recommends testing in those who are so sick they need to be hospitalized.

Go to [www.lchd.org](http://www.lchd.org) for further updates and to download the handouts: “Wash Your Hands” and “Cover Your Cough”.

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