

September 23, 2009

Dear Coaches,

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization signaled that a pandemic of H1N1 was underway. Public health officials believe H1N1 will again return in the fall with an increase in cases as early as late September and early October. Because individuals who are age 5 years to 24 years had a higher prevalence of H1N1 infection than other age groups college campuses are likely to have cases of novel H1N1 virus on campus.

The Pandemic Influenza Response Team at Muhlenberg College has been closely monitoring the H1N1 virus activity. In addition, we have been working with our local health department and have been tracking information provided by the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Muhlenberg College will be following the “CDC Guidance for Responses to Influenza for Institutions of Higher Education during the 2009-2010 Academic Year”. Since this disease is widespread and highly contagious, these recommendations are directed towards reducing the burden of disease and minimizing its spread. In addition to hand-washing, cough etiquette, promotion of the annual seasonal flu vaccine, and other non-pharmacologic interventions, the CDC has recommended “social isolation” of individuals with flu-like illness, including exclusion of ill individuals from school and other public activities until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever reducing medicine.

In complying with these recommendations, Muhlenberg College will support social isolation for those with flu-like illness. Flu-like illness is associated with symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, muscle aches, and sore throat. We expect students with flu-like illness to leave campus and return home to rest and recover. They may return to campus 24 hours after the fever has resolved as above. Students with flu-like illness who are unable to go home should not attend classes or any public gatherings and will need approval by the Dean of Students to remain on campus. If the current H1N1 trend continues, most student absences will be approximately one week or less.

Likewise, coaches experiencing flu symptoms should follow the CDC self-isolation guidelines and should not attend practices or participate in any public gatherings until fever free for 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications. Coaches should alert appropriate officials in their departments as soon as possible to inform them that they will be absent.

If the H1N1 strain begins to cause more severe disease, the CDC recommendations and the college’s response regarding social isolation may become more stringent.

Obviously, the possibility of player absenteeism will have an impact on your team. However, it is imperative that infected students minimize the spread of disease as much as possible by social isolation. Therefore, we are asking that you:

- Monitor students for influenza like illness and reinforce self isolation with your students. Remind them that in balancing public health and team sports, public health must carry the greatest weight.
- If a student presents with influenza like illness, please refer them to Health Services for evaluation.

It is also very important that coaches take care of themselves during this public health threat. Here are some simple suggestions, aimed at decreasing vulnerability:

- Bring and use instant hand sanitizer in your office.
- Place a departmental order for Clorox wipes through Plant Operations and encourage their use on office surfaces, such as door handles, counters and table tops.
- Do not bring ill children to campus.

For any questions related to H1N1, please call Health Services (484-664-3199).

Sincerely,

Sam Beidelman

Steve Nemes

Brynnmarie Dorsey

Director, Athletics

Head Athletic Trainer

Director, Health Services