

H1N1 Fact Sheet

Updated: November 3, 2009

Managing Stress During a Pandemic – Teachers

Teachers may notice changes in their students' behaviour that could indicate they are afraid or having a hard time coping with ongoing news regarding the H1N1 influenza pandemic. Children may not be able to explain how they are feeling and may not notice any differences in how they are behaving. Listed below are some behaviours you might observe.

Ages 4-12 – Elementary Students

- Emotions - feeling more afraid, scared or sad
- Anxiety - tense, upset, stomach ache, headache
- Excessive preoccupation with getting the flu - asking for reassurance from teachers, checking with teachers about physical complaints
- Clinging to parents/caregivers - trouble separating at school

Ages 13-18 – Junior & Senior High School Students

- Emotions – feeling scared, irritable or sad
- Worry - concerns that they might get sick or family and friends might become ill, and thinking about what might happen in Canada and the world
- Anxiety - feeling tense, upset, impatient, physical complaints of stomach ache, headache
- Excessive preoccupation with getting the flu - reading internet and news articles about the flu, checking with teachers around symptoms and requesting to leave school
- Behaviour - more easily frustrated, quicker to lose temper, less compliant with daily routine and requests

You may want to try some of the following suggestions to help your students cope with the feelings and behaviours they are experiencing:

- Acknowledge children's fears
- Allow a limited time for discussion, if this appears appropriate, and then proceed with the regular schedule for the day
- Provide reassurance by telling children lots of people are working hard to keep them safe
- Maintain daily routines at school. Children and teens thrive on structure
- Be calm and model confidence. Children learn to cope by watching how the significant adults in their lives cope in times of stress. Young children take their cues from parents/caregivers and other significant adults in their lives as to how scary things are based on parents'/caregivers' reactions
- Provide information your students can understand
- Limit exposure to news stories and images as these are not designed for delivery to children and youth audiences
- Reinforce things children can do to protect themselves - hand washing and coughing into sleeve
- Encourage questions

If you have ongoing concerns about any particular students, contact their parents/caregivers or call the mental health program at your local district health authority and/or your health centre if you live in a First Nation community.

