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Swine Flu Prevention on Campus

08.24.2009 | Health In addition to backpacks, books and notebooks, University of Dayton health officials want students to add another item to their back-to-school checklist: a digital thermometer.

The recommendation is part of the University's message to students and parents on preventing the spread and complications of the H1N1 flu virus, also known as swine flu. Thermometers will be available for purchase at the campus bookstore and the University health center.

"Fever is a major part of swine flu diagnosis," University of Dayton medical director Dr. Mary Buchwalder. "If a student feels ill, knowing whether they actually have a fever or not will help him or her make the right choices about interacting with others or coming in to the health center."

To spread the word about thermometers and practical steps to good hygiene for reducing the risk of flu infection, the University sent messages to incoming students and their parents this summer, placed posters in student housing areas and prepared a Web site with information about swine flu, what to do if a student has been exposed to the virus and how to treat the virus after diagnosis.

University of Dayton health officials don't expect the current strain swine flu to pose a significant threat to students, faculty or staff, but the University is preparing for cases of increased severity or complications.

"The majority of cases of swine flu have been similar to regular seasonal flu in symptoms, severity and complication rate," Dr. Buchwalder said. "Young adults normally recover from the flu with no or minimal complications within about a week."

The University has formed a pandemic flu preparedness committee to focus on prevention and promote a healthy campus environment. The committee is in consultation with Montgomery County’s and Ohio's departments of health for possible H1N1 immunizations. A vaccine is undergoing tests to assess its safety, although it is unknown specifically when a shot will be available. The University will follow guidelines from the Ohio Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control when a vaccine is available on who should receive it first, especially if the supply is limited.

The committee is reviewing the best way to distribute surgical masks if needed and is considering placing hand sanitizers at popular entryways to decrease the spread of germs.

The University of Dayton recommends students follow guidelines recently updated by the CDC for preventing the spread of the flu virus. Students with flu-like illness should:

- Stay away from classes and limit interactions with other people, except to seek medical care, while ill with fever and for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Return home if they live relatively close to campus.
- Remain in their rooms and receive care and meals from a single person — a "flu buddy" — who they can pair with to care for each other if either becomes ill.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, sharing eating or drinking utensils, or any contact likely to result in exposure to respiratory droplets. If close contact with others cannot be avoided, the ill student should wear a surgical mask during the period of contact.

The University's health center is available to students on campus in Gosiger Hall 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday during the school year. They can contact the center at 937-229-3131 to make an appointment or visit online.

For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.