

H1N1 Update October 27th 2009

According to the October 25 update from the Middlesex-London Health Unit on influenza activity, it appears that incidents of influenza like illnesses (ILI) continue to increase in the London area.

A system for tracking all absences related to any influenza activity is being activated, so that Brescia can respond appropriately, should employee absences increase within the Brescia community. As a result, we are asking that all employees who experience flu-like symptoms report directly to their manager/supervisor/Division Chair if they are going to miss work and self-report the reason for your absence. While absences for any reason will still need to be communicated to your manager, absences that specifically need to be self-reported include: (1) you have the flu or flu-like symptoms; (2) you need to be absent in order to care for a family member who is ill, or (3) you need to be absent because a dependent child is sent home from school or day-care because the school/daycare provider is closed due to influenza.

For your information, all flu related absences will be reported by managers to Human Resources (Jim Macdonald) on a daily basis. Tracking absences in this manner will allow Brescia to proactively address absenteeism issues before they have an impact on daily operations.

Please note: During this period of increased flu-like activity, Brescia is waiving the normal requirement of having an employee provide a doctor's note (i) after 3 days absence in order to access entitlements under Brescia's Sick Leave Benefits or (ii) after 5 days absence to access entitlements under Brescia's Short Term Disability Benefit Plan. For absences due to the flu, there will also be no requirement to provide a doctor's note for return to work. This waiver relating to doctor's notes applies only to absences that are flu related. The requirement for doctor's notes for other absences that are not flu related will continue. This change to normal policy is in response to a request from the Health Unit related to seeking medical care and providing doctor's notes to employers. The following direction is provided by the Health Unit:

Do not seek medical care unless you need it:

As influenza activity continues to increase in our community, only people who need health care should be going to their doctors or walk-in clinics. These are people outlined in Box C in the "Caring for People with Symptoms of Influenza" available at: <http://www.brescia.uwo.ca/pandemic.html>

These people can be placed on an antiviral drug to decrease their chances of developing complications of influenza. Only people with signs of severe or worsening illness, as outlined in Box D on the attached sheet, should go to the emergency department or urgent care.

It is very important that employers do not request a note from people returning to school, work or child care settings.

This would cause unnecessary demands on the health care system. People with symptoms of influenza can return to school, work, or child care when their fever is gone for **24 hours** and they are feeling better and are fully able to go back to normal activities. It is recognized that a cough may persist for several days to weeks.

Finally, a key component of pandemic planning is PREVENTION and CONTAINMENT. Information related to pandemic preparedness and tips for maintaining good health can be found on Brescia's web site.

Please direct questions to your manager/supervisor/Division Chair or to Jim Macdonald, Director of Human Resources.