

Dear Colleagues,

As we begin the 2009-2010 academic year, we would like your help in keeping the Columbia community as healthy as possible.

As you may know, cases of swine Influenza A (H1N1) are still being reported nationally as well as in the New York City area. Most of these cases have been reported as mild. Our University health experts continue to closely monitor the spread of H1N1 on the international, national and local levels, and to implement plans to protect the health of the Columbia community.

Since H1N1 first emerged in the spring, the University has implemented ways to educate our community and keep you healthy. One of the most important measures everyone can take to protect yourself and others is to practice preventive hygiene to limit the potential spread of disease. To help with this, educational fliers are posted throughout campus, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap dispensers are provided in public gathering places such as customer service desks, computer labs and food service areas.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that a vaccine for the H1N1 virus is under development and could be available later this fall. As soon as we have information outlining the national distribution guidelines for the H1N1 vaccine, we will immediately share that information with the Columbia community.

In the meantime, proper hygiene is the foremost protective measure everyone can take; wash your hands often or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoid close personal contact (hugging, kissing) with someone who shows symptoms. In addition, we strongly encourage you to get the seasonal flu vaccine. Though the seasonal vaccine will not protect you against H1N1, it is important to be protected from as many strains of the flu as possible. As we do each year, Columbia will provide seasonal flu vaccines at no cost to the Columbia community during the fall. Information about how to get your free seasonal flu shot will be widely distributed on campus later in September.

We hope you'll join in our efforts to disseminate information about prevention tips and resources. For current information about the flu, updated announcements from the University's administration, and flu shot fairs that will be scheduled in the fall, please visit the Columbia University Preparedness website:

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/studentservices/preparedness>

As always, if you are feeling ill, the University recommends that you stay home from work, school, public events or large gatherings to ensure the health and well-being of yourself and others. If you experience persistent fever, combined with muscle aches or fatigue, we recommend you call your healthcare provider for immediate evaluation of symptoms.

If you choose to stay home from work, please follow your normal departmental or school procedures for reporting absences. If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact your Departmental Administrator or your Human Resources Client Manager.

Faculty or staff who have sick family members are encouraged to review the Family and Medical Leave Act policy at:

<http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/fmla>

To learn more about caring for a sick person in your home, see the CDC guidelines:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

Have a safe and healthy academic year,

Cindy Durning

Vice President

Columbia University Human Resources