



Pandemic Preparation: Information for Residential Students



September 18, 2009

Dear Residential Student at UMBC:

We trust that your semester is off to a great start at UMBC. This summer you received a letter that shared information concerning the H1N1 flu. We are writing with updates and additional information related to the H1N1 outbreak. UMBC now has increasing numbers of students reporting influenza-like illness (ILI) diagnosed as H1N1 flu. While most ill persons are recovering with treatments of rest, fluids and over-the-counter flu and fever-reducing medications, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of prevention and self-care strategies if you are ill. Please read this information carefully.

FLU PREVENTION and SELF CARE STRATEGIES:

- 1) While you are well, create a "Flu Kit" by purchasing non-aspirin, fever-reducing medication (Tylenol, Advil, or similar brands), a thermometer, a decongestant, tissues, hand sanitizer, some surgical masks, soup, crackers, and water, tea or Gatorade type beverages. For more information on emergency supplies, visit www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov.
- 2) Practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing and before eating or touching your face. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective when soap and water is not easily available. Hand sanitizers have been installed in the lobbies of each residential community, in food service areas and in other public areas such as the Commons, the Library and computer labs.
- 3) Practice respiratory etiquette by covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues into the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth; germs are spread this way.
- 4) Please talk with your family now about how you would return home if you become ill or in the less likely event that we close campus.
- 5) Wearing a mask when ill can help to keep from spreading germs through coughing and sneezing (Note: if the mask is used and disposed of properly.) Some people may feel it necessary to wear masks when there is an outbreak of a virus in order to stay well. Currently, CDC does not indicate that wearing a surgical mask when well will protect you from getting the H1N1 virus.

IF YOU BECOME ILL

As a member of the UMBC community we want to stress that the need for social responsibility to our community is paramount. If you are ill the university would have every expectation that you take care for not only yourself but for the community to which you belong. Please make every effort to follow the protocols outlined.

- 1) If you do get the flu or flu-like cough, runny nose, fatigue, muscle aches, fever, chills, nausea, drink plenty of fluids, and get plenty of rest, and take non-aspirin medication for fever.
- 2) Seek professional medical advice from family physician, UHS or emergency care as needed, but especially if you have shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, increasing fever, dizziness or confusion, severe or persistent vomiting or symptoms that return following a brief recovery. University Health Services is open 8:30 am– 6:00 pm Monday through Thursdays, and 8:30 am– 5:00 pm Fridays during the regular semesters. If you can do so safely, please call 410-455- 2542, for advice or appointment before coming to health services. After hours, please call University Police at 410-455-5555. Police dispatch can connect you with our on call physician service or contact emergency medical care if needed.
- 3) If you are ill, you should not attend classes and limit interactions with other people by self isolating at your permanent home off-campus. If you are able to do so, we encourage you to travel home by private car. To assist in your recovery and the health of the residential community we encourage you to stay at home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen, aspirin or acetaminophen.)
- 4) If you are unable to self isolate off-campus at home, please contact Residential Life staff at 410-455-2591 to make arrangements for self isolation in temporary rooms or for assistance with other self isolation strategies. Cleaning kits are available at community desks with specific instructions on how well roommates can clean your shared living space to help eliminate the spread of H1N1.
- 5) In an effort to track the numbers of sick students we ask that you call any residential community desk or our Residential Office or University Health Services to report your illness. More information concerning an online process will be sent to you shortly.

STAY INFORMED

For the most up-to-date campus information and links to other websites, please review the UHS website under the Health Alerts section. The Web site address is www.umbc.edu/uhs/healthalerts or visit <http://www.flu.gov>, or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).

In the event of any health emergency, University Health Services will work closely with and follow the mandates of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (MDHMH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). University Health Services will also be following the MDHMH and CDC guidelines for vaccinations should vaccine become available to the student population for the H1N1 flu and the general flu. We will notify you via the UMBC email and the University's website about any changes to our institution's strategy to prevent the spread of flu on our campus. If you or your parents have any other questions or concerns, please contact University Health Services at 410-455-2542.

Healthfully Yours,

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