

Dear MTSU Students,

This summer we began seeing a few students with H1N1 flu. As the Fall semester begins and more students are on campus, we expect that the incidence of this new flu virus at MTSU will increase dramatically. It is very possible that we will have many students contracting the H1N1 flu before we have an H1N1 vaccine available. While we cannot stop this virus from coming to MTSU, we will do our best to minimize its impact.

Thankfully, at this time, H1N1 flu is behaving like typical seasonal flu. Students who have H1N1 influenza typically have a fever for 2-4 days and are considered contagious for 24 hours after resolution of fever. This means the typical college student may need to miss 3-5 days of class, work, and extra-curricular activities.

At our Health Center, we are placing all students with flu like symptoms in masks immediately when they enter to prevent spread in the waiting room areas and halls. We will be offering a rapid office flu test to all students with flu like symptoms, but we want students to be aware of the limitations of office testing for influenza. Office influenza tests can miss over 30 % of flu cases. Therefore, we will be treating all *suspected* cases of the H1N1 flu as if they are *confirmed*; offering anti-viral medication, such as Tamiflu, when appropriate, and recommending that students stay away from class and activities until they have no fever for 24 hours to decrease risk of spread. For roommates and close contacts, we can offer a preventive course of anti-viral, especially if they have asthma or other significant medical conditions.

This summer we were designated a US Influenza Surveillance Site, one of 18 such sites in Middle Tennessee. We will send a limited number of flu test samples to the state lab to be tested for H1N1 virus by PCR, and will have a further subset of these samples cultured for sensitivities to current antivirals. We hope that this link with the CDC and our regional health department will keep us ahead of any changes in the flu.

We will be providing information about H1N1 vaccination, as well as seasonal influenza vaccination, as soon as word is available. At this time dates have not been set for vaccine distribution. As soon as possible we will inform students about vaccine availability.

In light of the small risk of more severe disease with any influenza virus, including H1N1 influenza, we want to ensure that students are aware of the warning signs with influenza that necessitate urgent medical attention:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worsening cough

For more information on influenza please visit our other links to flu information including Frequently Asked Questions at www.mtsu.edu/healthservices . The Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site at www.cdc.gov also has updated information available.

Sincerely,

Richard Chapman

Director MTSU Student Health Services