

H1N1 and General Influenza Policy Montague Parks & Recreation Department

Due to the significant impact of the H1N1 virus, MPRD has established a policy for participants, volunteers, and staff to help minimize its effect relative to our programs, activities and events.

As you may be aware, the 2009 H1N1 flu virus includes fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Vomiting and diarrhea may also be associated with this virus, and some people have suffered respiratory symptoms without a fever. Severe illnesses and deaths have occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus. People infected with season and H1N1 flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Considering that transmission of the virus can be widespread in school settings, it is not unreasonable to think that the same can be said for recreational venues and programs. Therefore, ***we request that all sick individuals refrain from attending or participating in MPRD programs for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever***, even if antiviral medicines have been taken. The fever with influenza can last 2-5 days or more, so individuals should be prepared to keep themselves removed from programs as long as it takes to become fever-free for 24 hours. We would also recommend that individuals take a little more time off beyond the 24-hour window to allow the body to recover, and protect against relapse. This is not only at the benefit to you/your child, but also, the other participants, volunteers, and staff as well.

In regards to recreational water environments; according to the Centers for Disease Control, recreational water that has been treated at CDC recommended disinfectant levels (ex. chlorine) *does not likely* pose a risk for transmission of influenza viruses. No research has been completed on the susceptibility of 2009 H1N1 influenza virus to chlorine and other disinfectants used in swimming pools, interactive fountains, and other recreational venues. However, recent studies have demonstrated that free chlorine levels recommended by CDC are adequate to disinfect other flu viruses. It is likely that other influenza viruses such as 2009 H1N1 virus would also be similarly disinfected by chlorine. However it should also be noted that, when it comes to the virus spreading at recreational water venues *outside of the water* it is no different than any other group setting. The spread of the flu will be spread from person to person.

If it is found that your child is exhibiting flu-like symptoms *during our program*, and you are not present, your child will be brought to an isolated area and you will be contacted immediately to pick up your child. Again, this is out of benefit for all parties. However, if a parent cannot be reached, we will then contact individuals listed as emergency contacts on your child's registration form. Please make sure that all contact information is current and up to date.

If you have any specific questions for the Parks & Recreation Department, please call us at 863-3216, or feel free to e-mail us at recdir@montague-ma.gov or recclerk@montague-ma.gov. For updated information on the H1N1 virus, please refer to www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm.