

Dear Students,

Welcome to Fall Term! I hope that the 2009-2010 school year is filled with academic success and good health for each of you. To ensure this, I would like to highlight some important health information regarding flu prevention and treatment and new College procedures to promote a healthy College community. Health officials are anticipating high rates of influenza this year as the Novel H1N1 Influenza continues to circulate. At Eckerd, with many students living together and sharing classrooms and eating facilities, viruses can spread quickly if prevention practices are not implemented. Please take note of the following flu prevention guidelines and do your part to keep our community healthy.

Know the symptoms of the flu: The flu is different from a cold. The flu or influenza-like-illness (ILI) usually comes on suddenly and is defined as a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit) plus cough and/or sore throat. Some individuals may also experience body aches, nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea. It is recommended that all students purchase a personal thermometer (available at all drug stores for a minimal cost).

Stay home if you are sick: Students who experience influenza-like-illness (ILI) should self-isolate (i.e., stay away from others as much as possible) in their dorm room or at home until 24 hours after their fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit) is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medications (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen). Individuals who are ill should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. You should be prepared to resume your studies from home as your recovery permits. A mild, lingering cough may occur. Barring any other flu symptoms, this cough should not prevent you from returning to class.

You do NOT need to obtain doctors' notes for missed classes because of influenza-like-illness; however, you DO need to email your professors and Eckerd's Flu Alias (flu@eckerd.edu) if you miss class due to influenza-like-illness as soon as possible. It is important that students obtain from their instructors information about how best to continue or resume their academic work so as not to fall too far behind in their courses.

Know if you are at-risk for complications from influenza and respond accordingly: Students at risk for influenza complications (e.g., students who have asthma, diabetes or compromised immune systems or if they are pregnant) should seek immediate medical attention if they are experiencing an influenza-like-illness (ILI) and they should contact their healthcare provider if they have been in close contact with someone with ILI. Their medical provider may prescribe an antiviral, which is most effective when administered within 48 hours of the onset of illness.

If you are at risk for influenza complications you may have the option to temporarily re-locate: Students at risk for complication from influenza (e.g., students who have asthma, diabetes or comprised immune systems or if they are pregnant), may ask to temporarily relocate to another residential setting if they are sharing a living space with individuals experiencing ILI. Students should send a message to Eckerd's Flu Alias

(flu@eckerd.edu) for more information. If there are high rates of influenza on campus, at-risk students should speak with their health care provider about self-isolating from classes and events.

Ask for help if you need it. Students who are self-isolating in the residence hall might want to ask a friend to pick up meals and other necessities, as needed. If any student is having difficulty accessing medical supplies or food, they should send a message to the Flu Alias (flu@eckerd.edu). Assistance will be provided.

Seek medical attention if necessary: According to the CDC, most individuals who experience influenza-like-illness (and are not at risk for influenza complications) do not need to seek medical attention. **It is important to seek medical attention immediately if one experiences any of the following:**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

In the event of a medical emergency, call 911 and campus safety (727-864-8260).

Practice Good Hygiene: The best way to prevent the spread of influenza is to implement good hygiene practices.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid sharing items such as beverages, eating utensils, and make-up.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Consider getting vaccinated for seasonal influenza and H1N1 Influenza A (when it becomes available): The seasonal influenza vaccine will be available at Health Services this Fall. Information on the H1N1 Influenza A vaccine will be shared as it becomes available to us through the local health department.

We are working closely with the Pinellas County Health Department to monitor flu conditions and make decisions about the best steps to take concerning our community. We will keep you updated with new information as it becomes available via email and through the College's Pandemic Flu Webpage: www.eckerd.edu/health/flu/. More information is available in the attached electronic flu kit. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for containing the spread of flu at Eckerd,

Sincerely, Whitney