



Soccer...and “Swine Flu”: Some practical advice.

As you are undoubtedly aware H1N1 (“Swine Flu”) has appeared in Canada. While to date most cases of this virus resemble seasonal flu, there have been some severe cases and deaths in Canada. Young people can be among those hardest hit by this virus. Given that those involved in soccer competitions often live in close contact with teammates and other competitors it makes sense for all of us involved in sport to be aware of how we might minimize the risk of transmission of the flu...and understand how to deal with those who might develop flu-like symptoms in the course of participating in events or tournaments.

The advice provided to the general public to avoid the H1N1 virus, and other illnesses, also applies to athletes and those involved with sports in their communities. It is important for everyone, both at home, at work and at play, to follow these simple hygiene tips to help avoid becoming ill or spreading viruses:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available – Wash your hands every time you pass a sink!
- Bring alcohol-based hand sanitizer with you to competitions and training where soap and water may not be readily available;
- Don't share water bottles or other drinking/eating utensils with other athletes; Educate players and coaches to bring their own water bottles, suitably identified with name and player number.
- Cough into your arm or sleeve. Tissues can be used to cover coughs and sneezes, but be sure to wash your hands after throwing out the tissue;
- Clean shared-use equipment and common touch surfaces (e.g. handrails, door knobs, computer keyboards) regularly with household cleaner or disinfectant wipes.
- In residences or hotels ensure that players and coaches avoid mixing towels & face cloths – and try to keep rooms as clean and tidy as possible!
- If a player or official begins to develop symptoms of a flu-like illness (fever, cough, muscle pain, headache) move them to a room of their own if possible. Those with such symptoms should stay away from practices, games or tournaments until they are feeling well and able to resume normal activities. Anyone with flu-like symptoms should not be participating in, or attending practices, games or other events.

Players can safely participate in the FIFA Fair Play hand shake at the start/end of a game. All normal practices are safe, as long as proper hygiene procedures are followed.

In general...successful preventive practices consist of “...doing ordinary things extraordinarily well”.

Contact local public health officials if questions or concerns arise or visit Health Canada website www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php for the latest information