



Higher Education & Training: Health, Wellness and Development Centre

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To: All university Vice Chancellors, TVET College Principals, and CET Learning Centres	From: Prof Ramneek Ahluwalia, CEO of Higher Health
Cc: Relevant University, TVET and CET staff	16 May 2024

CIRCULAR TO ALL INSTITUTIONS REGARDING RECENT SPIKES IN INFLUENZA INFECTIONS

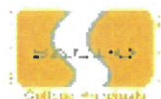
It has come to our attention that there has been a spike in the number of cases of students on campuses presenting with flu-like symptoms. Because of the nature of airborne viruses such as influenza, swine flu and Covid 19 among others, infections spread rapidly from student to student, who are in close proximation to one another. This circular aims to provide some basic information about the current spike in infections in an effort to minimise panic among staff and students, and to try to manage conditions within institutions.

According to the NICD, the 2024 influenza season began around 22 April 2024. The majority of people with influenza will present with mild illness, usually resolving within 3-7 days. However, influenza may cause severe illness leading to hospitalisation or possibly death, especially among those who are at risk of severe influenza illness or complications. High-risk groups include pregnant women, individuals living with HIV, those with chronic conditions such as diabetes, lung disease, tuberculosis, heart disease, renal disease, and obesity, older individuals (≥aged 65) and young children. These groups should be encouraged to seek medical help early. Typical symptoms include: fever, malaise; headache; runny nose; sneezing; reduced sense of smell; metallic taste in the mouth; chills; and cough.

The Influenza vaccination is recommended to protect against infection and severe illness. Ideally the influenza vaccine should be administered prior to the start of the influenza season because it takes about 2 weeks for antibodies to develop following vaccination. However, it is never too late to vaccinate. Individuals at risk for severe illness are strongly encouraged to seek the influenza vaccine

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Directors: Prof W de Villiers (Chairperson), Ms P Dipiloane, Ms S Mahlobogoane, Dr P Matutu , Prof T Mayekiso , Prof N Phaswana-Mafuya, Dr D Tromp, Prof R Ahluwalia (CEO)

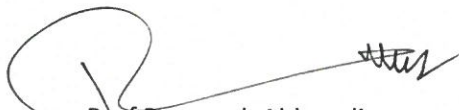


from either a public health clinic or privately through general practitioners and pharmacies. Annual vaccination is needed as the influenza virus is constantly changing and immunity to the vaccine wanes with time. Receiving the vaccine can reduce visits to clinics or doctor's offices, absenteeism from work and school due to influenza illness, as well as prevent influenza-related hospitalizations.

To minimise the transmission of seasonal influenza the following non-pharmaceutical measures can be applied: avoid close contact with sick individuals, practice proper hygiene including frequent hand washing, avoid touching the mouth, eyes, and nose, and covering coughs and sneezes (preferably into your elbow or a tissue, which should be promptly disposed of away from others).

Individuals experiencing flu-like symptoms should stay at home to avoid infecting others. It is advisable to seek medical attention if symptoms do not improve in 3-7 days or if symptoms worsen in that time.

Yours sincerely



Prof Ramneek Ahluwalia
CEO, Higher Health

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