

Dear Students,

As you prepare to return to campus, please be aware of an important **Flu Update**.

Seasonal Flu

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health has reported that the **rates of influenza and influenza-like illness** in the state are **on the rise** and local emergency departments are reporting many cases of the flu in the past two weeks. The length of the flu season can be unpredictable, but has lasted into the month of March in past years. This year, the predominant strain of the virus is H1N1, which is known to cause **severe respiratory illness**. Thankfully, this year's vaccine **does** provide protection against a few flu virus strains, including H1N1. Please note that **it is NOT too late to get your flu vaccine**.

Flu Shots

Stonehill College Health Services **recommends that you get a flu shot**, if you have not yet done so this season, **before you return to campus**. The flu vaccine takes about two weeks to provide immunity, so **do not wait** to get vaccinated. Call your primary care provider or visit a local pharmacy to receive the vaccination.

After vaccinating more than 530 students this fall against influenza, Health Services only has a few remaining flu shots, which are available on a first-come-first-serve basis. If you are 18-years-old and younger, we can offer you a dose of the "FluMist" nasal spray, of which we have 20 remaining doses. If you are unable to arrange vaccination before returning to campus, or our supply has been depleted, the local CVS on Washington Street still has flu vaccine doses available and accepts most health insurance plans.

Flu Symptoms

Symptoms include **sudden onset** of fever (usually over 100.4) and chills, cough, and body aches. Some people also experience headaches, sore throat and fatigue.

Steps to Take

A bout of the flu can last from four to seven days. If you have the flu, you should stay at home or in your residence room until you are free of the fever for **24 hours**. Please contact your professors to arrange your make-up work, and fill out [this form](#) to arrange for a friend to pick up a meal for you from the Dining Hall.

While sick with the flu, remember to drink plenty of fluids and get plenty of rest.

Prevention Tips

Vaccination is the BEST protection against contracting the flu, but other tips for staying flu-free include: washing your hands regularly, covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your upper sleeve when you sneeze or cough, avoiding people who seem sick, keeping work surfaces clean with a disinfectant, and staying at home if you are sick.

For more information on the flu, visit the Health Services Website at <http://www.stonehill.edu/offices-services/health-services/> or the Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>.