

Reality check

A number of rumors have been circulating on campus about Cornell's response to the H1N1 flu virus. Here we set the record straight.

Rumor:

Cornell is planning to suspend classes and/or move to pass-fail grading for the semester.

Answer:

There are no plans to suspend classes. Nor is there a plan at the university level to move grading to a pass/fail basis. Instead, such decisions have been left to individual faculty members, their departments and their colleges. Any students who feel they are not being given reasonable flexibility should speak to their advisers for assistance.

Rumor:

Students who visit Gannett Health Services with flu symptoms will be quarantined for up to two weeks.

Answer:

No students with the flu are being quarantined by Gannett. Public health officials, including those at Gannett, do advise that those with flu symptoms "self isolate" in their rooms or in their homes to reduce the spread to others. People with the flu are asked to stay out of circulation and at least six feet away from others until they have been fever-free (without fever-reducing medications) for at least 24-hours.

Rumor:

Wearing a mask will prevent you from getting the flu.

Answer:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) generally recommends that masks be worn by the sick rather than the healthy. The H1N1 virus is spread mainly by droplets produced by coughs or sneezes from infected people. (It can also be spread by touching an infected surface and then touching the mouth or nose.) Thus, wearing a mask is a way to try to keep the virus from spreading, so that a cough or a sneeze is less likely to produce droplets that can contaminate surfaces or be inhaled by those within six feet.

Rumor:

Gannett is telling students with flu symptoms not to tell others that they have the flu, so as not to cause panic.

Answer:

Although a person's health information is confidential, Gannett does not coach or encourage anyone to conceal information in an attempt to hide the risk and prevent panic. What individuals do with their health information is entirely up to them. Gannett encourages students who have the flu to discuss with roommates or housemates a plan to help reduce the risk of transmission of the virus to others. Because the flu virus can be transmitted by those who have not yet developed symptoms, the best defenses are:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently
- Use hand sanitizer when soap and water aren't available
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth
- Keep your distance (six feet) from those who you think might have the flu
- Avoid sharing cups, utensils, etc
- Keep shared surfaces clean with disinfectant spray or wipes
- Get vaccinated

Rumor:

Students are being told not to come to Gannett if they have the flu.

Answer:

Gannett has reduced the number of routine health care appointments to focus resources on those who are sick. If you have flu-like symptoms and you need an appointment at Gannett, one will be scheduled.

Gannett encourages students to call them at 255-5155 at any time of the day or night to consult with a health care provider about *any* questions or concerns about their health and illness of any kind – especially the flu. The on-call provider will help students determine what care they need and how and when to get it. Most students who have been sick with H1N1 flu so far have had mild to moderate symptoms and medical intervention has not been necessary. Some students do need to be evaluated at Gannett – particularly those with severe symptoms or with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of complications.

Rumor:

Students with the flu who aren't getting antiviral medications at Gannett can go to Cayuga Medical Center and receive them.

Answer:

Cayuga Medical Center and other health care providers in the community now have the same protocols as Gannett for prescribing antivirals (such as Tamiflu). In accordance with CDC recommendations, antiviral medications will most likely be prescribed only for those who have experienced worsening flu symptoms or who have underlying medical conditions.

To learn more, visit Gannett's website: www.gannett.cornell.edu and click on the red button that reads "You and the Flu". If you have any further questions related to the flu at Cornell you also can call the Cornell Flu Line Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM until 4:30 PM at 607-255-0101.