

K-State Expert Says Fear Of H1N1 Amplifies Normal Anxiety About School, Offers Tips On How To Cope

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For university students, anxiety about grades is nothing new. But this year, students also may be anxious about the H1N1 flu virus and missing classes.

Dorinda Lambert, associate director of Kansas State University's counseling services, says that [students](#) may be concerned about getting sick, but only insofar as it will affect their ability to perform their academic duties.

"Stress about the H1N1 is probably stress that is mainly from parents who are worried about their kids," Lambert said. "Most of the students themselves are feeling pressure about school and not wanting to miss anything."

To deal with this anxiety, Lambert said that the first thing students should do is get the facts about the H1N1 virus, including the best practices in prevention.

"Listen to what the doctors are telling you, listen to what public health officials are telling you and follow those instructions," she said.

Besides [washing hands](#) frequently with soap and water, people should cover their noses and mouths when coughing or sneezing; avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouths; and try to avoid having contact with those

who are sick. Students also can go to reliable Web sites such as www.flu.gov to get information, Lambert said.

Because of the rigors of college, students will almost always be tempted to come to campus when not feeling well, considering illness only a minor setback. However, Lambert said the risk isn't really worth it.

"If you go to class but your mind isn't concentrating and absorbing the material, it's a waste of your time. Plus, it's dangerous to your [classmates](#) because you're spreading disease," she said. "Students are being encouraged to stay home if they are sick so we don't have a [pandemic](#) on campus."

At K-State, students who get sick are being encouraged to stay home and not return to class until their fever has been gone for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. Faculty also have been asked not to require doctor's notes for academic absences of students because of the H1N1 [flu](#) outbreak.

Lambert said managing stress and staying healthy go hand in hand.

Adequate sleep, eating right and developing effective study skills are key. Taking care of your mind also will help your body be better prepared to fight off disease, she said.

"When you're in high-stress mode your immune system is compromised," she said. "The mind and body are connected."

For brief, instant stress relief, Lambert suggests the following tips:

* Take a mini "mind vacation." Close your eyes and picture a place where you feel happy, comfortable and relaxed. Breathe from your abdomen, not your chest, and breathe slowly and evenly.

* Ease the tension of studying. As you take a deep breath, relax your jaw, and then drop your shoulders as you breathe out. Gently roll your head from side to side several times. Picture yourself in a place of comfort and relaxation.

* Stay alert and stretch. If you can, stand up and stretch or sit up and stretch. If any stretching would be just too public, quietly tense and hold your muscles and then release. Do this three times, holding for 10 seconds each time and feel the energy.

* Multiple times a day, review your body for tension. Breathe deeply and think "relax, release, let go" to release tension. Then calmly move through your activity.

Provided by Kansas State University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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