

# General Information regarding H1N1 09 Human Swine Flu

**The following information has been prepared for staff and students involved in international travel**

## **Being prepared for a Pandemic**

Influenza pandemic can occur when a new influenza virus subtype emerges and spreads easily among human beings.

Pandemics have been observed for several hundred years. The best documented pandemics occurred during the 20th century, in 1918 (Spanish flu), 1957 (Asian flu) and 1968 (Hong Kong flu). These varied in severity with an estimated 1-50 million excess deaths during the pandemic.

A new pandemic is considered inevitable but nobody can predict when and where it will emerge, who it will affect or how severe it will be.

## **Current situation**

The World Health Organization (WHO), and all regional health authorities are closely monitoring the progress of a new strain of influenza A H1N1 09 (human swine flu) which has been identified in an outbreak originating in Mexico. Many countries across the globe have officially reported thousands of confirmed cases of H1N1 Influenza 09 infection. Whilst the [number of cases](#) continues to rise across the world, the majority of cases notified outside Mexico are still being reported as causing mild illnesses only.

## **Level of alert**

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared this to be a public health emergency of international concern and have raised the pandemic alert level from phase 5 to phase 6. This indicates that all countries should immediately activate their pandemic preparedness plans and remain on high alert for unusual outbreaks of influenza-like illness and severe pneumonia. [Pandemic Preparedness Phase 6](#) indicates sustained community level outbreaks in at least one other country in another WHO region.

All Member States of the relevant regions to which you are travelling have developed pandemic preparedness plans.

Monash University has developed this set of reference materials to be used in conjunction with recommendations from local health authorities and government health agencies. In addition, comprehensive information can also be obtained from the Monash University OHS web page <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/ohse/news/swine-flu.html#information>

## **Why are we so worried about this pandemic possibility when thousands die every year from seasonal epidemics?**

Seasonal epidemics occur every year and we are able to treat the virus with seasonal vaccines. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic. It is a new virus and one to which the populations will have no immunity.

## **What are the symptoms of H1N1 09 influenza?**

Early signs of H1N1 09 influenza are flu-like, including fever ( usually above 38 degrees ), cough, headache, muscle and joint pain, sore throat and runny nose, and sometimes vomiting or diarrhea. It is the experience of most countries outside of Mexico, that the symptoms of H1N1 09 influenza are generally less severe than normal winter seasonal influenza.

## **How do people become infected with H1N1 09 influenza?**

Outbreaks in humans are now occurring from human-to-human transmission. When infected people cough or sneeze, infected droplets get on their hands, drop onto surfaces, or are dispersed into the air. Another person can breathe in contaminated air, or touch infected hands or surfaces, and be exposed. To prevent spread, people should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing, and wash their hands regularly.

## **What can I do to protect myself from catching H1N1 09 influenza ?**

The main route of transmission of the H1N1 09 influenza virus seems to be similar to normal winter seasonal influenza, via droplets that are expelled by speaking, sneezing or coughing. You can prevent infection by avoiding close contact with people who show influenza-like symptoms (trying to maintain a distance of about 1 metre if possible) and by taking the following measures:

- avoid touching your mouth and nose;
- clean hands thoroughly with soap and water, or cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub on a regular basis (especially if touching the mouth and nose, or surfaces that are potentially contaminated);
- avoid close contact with people who might be ill;
- reduce the time spent in crowded settings if possible;
- improve airflow in your living space by opening windows;
- practice good health habits including adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, and keeping physically active.

## **What to do if you are experiencing flu like symptoms?**

If you feel unwell, have high fever, cough or sore throat:

- stay at home and keep away from work, school or crowds;
- rest and take plenty of fluids;
- cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and, if using tissues, make sure you dispose of them carefully. Clean your hands immediately after with soap and water or cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub;
- if you do not have a tissue close by when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth as much as possible with the crook of your elbow;
- inform family and friends about your illness and try to avoid contact with other people;
- If possible, contact a health professional before traveling to a health facility to discuss whether a medical examination is necessary.

### **What should I do if I need medical attention?**

- If possible, contact your health care provider before traveling to a health facility, and report your symptoms. Explain why you think you have influenza A (H1N1). Follow the advice given to you.
- If you cannot contact your doctor before travelling to a health facility, tell a health care worker of your suspicion of infection immediately after arrival at the clinic or hospital.
- Cover your nose and mouth during travel.

### **Should I go to work if I have the flu but am feeling OK?**

No. Whether you have H1N1 09 influenza or a normal winter seasonal influenza, you should stay home and away from work through the duration of your symptoms. This is a precaution that can protect your work colleagues and others.

### **What about using a mask?**

If you are not sick you do not have to wear a mask. If you are caring for a sick person, you can wear a mask when you are in close contact with the ill person and dispose of it immediately after contact, and cleanse your hands thoroughly afterwards.

If you are sick and must travel or be around others, cover your mouth and nose. Using a mask correctly in all situations is essential. Incorrect use actually increases the chance of spreading infection.

### **Should I take an antiviral now just in case I catch the new virus?**

No. You should only take an antiviral, such as oseltamivir or zanamivir, if your health care provider advises you to do so. Individuals should not buy medicines to prevent or fight this new influenza without a prescription, and they should exercise caution in buying antivirals over the Internet

### **Is an effective vaccine against the H1N1 09 influenza virus already available?**

No, but work is already under way to develop such a vaccine. Making a completely new influenza vaccine can take five to six months.

### **I have had the seasonal flu injection, does this protect me from Swine flu?**

The best scientific evidence currently suggests that seasonal influenza vaccines will offer little or no protection against H1N1 09 influenza. However preventing the circulating seasonal influenza by being vaccinated assists in staying well through the flu season (usually winter)

### **What to do if you have been in contact with someone who has contracted swine flu?**

If you have any concerns about whether or not you've had contact with someone with H1N1 09, please contact your doctor for further advice.

### **What do we advise staff/ students who arrive from affected areas?**

Government and local health authorities will determine entry requirements for international staff and students arriving at your campus.

It is important that students or staff who become sick or feel unwell with respiratory or flu-like symptoms in the first week after arrival should seek medical assessment with a doctor. They should inform their doctor of their recent travel arrangements.

## Travel

It is important to check with the relevant government travel advisories and WHO travel advisories before any travel arrangements are made.

[http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently\\_asked\\_questions/travel/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/travel/en/index.html)

As with all international travel, it is recommended that all Monash staff and students have a **pre travel health check** with a doctor regarding recommended vaccinations and health advice. In addition, the seasonal Influenza Vaccination is recommended. If you are feeling unwell or have symptoms of influenza, you should not travel. If you have any doubts about your health, you should check with your health care provider.

Monash Staff and students can further reduce their risk of infection by H1N1 Influenza 09 by:

1. Careful attention to personal health hygiene and hand washing
2. Paying attention to announcements from local government and following all local health recommendations
3. Seeing a doctor if you are ill with fever and other symptoms of human swine flu, and especially if you have had contact with someone with human swine flu or a severe respiratory illness in the past 7 days before becoming ill.

**On return, Monash staff and students who become sick or feel unwell with respiratory or flu-like symptoms**, should seek medical assessment with University Health Service or their personal doctor. They should inform their doctor, without being asked, of their recent travel destinations.

## Useful sites

Monash University <http://www.adm.monash.edu.au/ohse/news/swine-flu.html#information>

WHO FAQs [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently\\_asked\\_questions/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/en/index.html)

WHO <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>

## *Tips for staying well during winter*

### **Personal Hygiene and Cough Etiquette - Protecting yourself and others against respiratory illness**

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Use a tissue and dispose of this once used in the waste
- Always wash hands after coughing and sneezing or disposing of tissues
- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose and eyes
- Avoid contact with individuals at risk (eg small children or those with underlying or chronic illnesses such as immune suppression or lung disease) until influenza-like symptoms have resolved.
- Avoid contact with people who have influenza-like systems.
- Ask people to use a tissue and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and to wash their hands afterwards

## ***Hand washing and Hand hygiene***

The most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands!

- Hand washing is the single most important measure to reduce the risks of transmitting infection from one person to another
- Hand washing with soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic hand was should be performed regularly. Hands should be thoroughly dried, preferably using disposable tissues or towels. Use the disposable towel to open the door
- Hand washing and drying should always be done after coughing, sneezing or handling used tissues or after touching objects, materials or hard surfaces that may have been contaminated by someone else with infectious illness
- Hand-to-face contact such as can occur during eating, normal grooming, or smoking presents significant risks because of the potential for transmission of influenza from surfaces contaminated with wet respiratory droplets. Hand washing should always be carried out before and after eating, grooming, smoking or any other activity that involves hand-to-face contact

#### Tips for the differences between seasonal influenza and the common cold

Symptom	Seasonal Influenza	Common Cold
Fever	Usual, sudden onset >38°	Rare
Headache	Usual and can be severe	Rare
Aches and pains	Usual and can be severe	Rare
Debilitating fatigue	Usual, early onset can be severe	Rare
Fatigue and weakness	Usual and can last 2-3 weeks or more after the acute illness	Sometimes, but mild
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea	In children <5 years old	Rare
Watering of the eyes	Rare	Usual
Runny, stuffy nose	Rare	Usual
Sneezing	Rare in early stages	Usual
Sore throat	Usual	
Chest discomfort	Usual and can be severe	Sometimes, but mild to moderate
Complications	Respiratory failure; can worsen a current chronic condition; can be life threatening	Sinus congestion or ear-ache
Fatalities	Well recognized	Not reported
Prevention	Influenza vaccine; frequent hand-washing; cover your cough	Frequent hand washing; cover your cough

### Importantly, remember to

**At the earliest onset of flu like symptoms contact your doctor.**

When you are ill, stay at home.

**Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**

Maintain good health hygiene practices to reduce getting the flu and passing it on to others.

# STAFF INFLUENZA NOTICE

Influenza is a contagious disease. To help reduce the spread of influenza in this workplace, the following actions are required of everybody.

## **DO NOT COME TO WORK IF YOU HAVE**

- chills, shivering and a fever (temperature  $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$ )
- muscle aches and pains
- sore throat
- dry cough
- trouble breathing
- sneezing
- stuffy or runny nose
- extreme tiredness

If some of the above symptoms apply to you, please stay home, seek medical advice and wait until you have recovered before returning to work.

If you start to feel ill at work with the above symptoms advise your Manager and keep at least one metre away from others. Contact your Doctor for further advice.

If you have recently arrived or returned from overseas, you may be at risk from influenza and you should advise your Manager of your recent travel.

# Protect yourself and your family

## Cover your cough and sneeze



1

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

2

Put your used tissue in the rubbish bin.



3

Wash your hands with soap and running water. Dry your hands thoroughly with a disposable paper towel.



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# Protect yourself and your family

## Wash your hands regularly



1

Wet your hands.

Put soap on your hands.



2



3

Rub all parts of your hands until you have a thick lather.

Rinse your hands under running water.



4



5

Dry your hands thoroughly with a disposable paper towel.

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