

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about H1N1 Flu: Faith and Community-based Organizations

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### What is novel H1N1?

H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease, similar to the regular seasonal flu. It has commonly been called swine flu. It appears to be spreading fast in younger people, specifically 10-24 year olds. The severity of the disease varies from very mild symptoms to severe illness. While most people have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

### What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1?

Signs of H1N1 and seasonal flu are similar. Signs of flu include: fever, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and cough, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people with H1N1 flu have also reported nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

### What steps can staff, volunteers, and members or clients take to stay healthy?

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water, especially if coughing or sneezing. Using alcohol-based cleaners is also helpful.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette. Cover mouth and nose with a tissue. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into an elbow or shoulder, not into hands.
- Encourage staff, volunteers and members to get vaccinated against seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu. It is recommended that staff, volunteers and members most at risk for complications, including pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions, get the H1N1 vaccine.
- Consider social distancing practices. Allowing staff to work off-site or in alternative sites, using staggered starting times or increasing the distance between work stations could help reduce spread of the flu.
- Providing counseling and other ways to reduce stress will be a vital role of faith and community-based organizations. Consider existing resources for community mental health and counseling services.

### What other steps can employers take to prepare for the flu season?

- Review and test your current flu plan. Share your plans with staff and clearly communicate expectations.
- Identify persons with special needs and include these needs in your plan.
- Create flexible leave policies so sick staff and those who need to stay home to care for sick family members can do so. Be prepared for the effect school and childcare closures may have on absenteeism. Schools and childcare programs may close, particularly if the severity increases.
- Monitor absenteeism throughout the fall and winter. If these numbers are higher than during the average season, consider contacting your local health department.

### What should staff, volunteers, and members or clients do if they notice someone with flu-like illness?

- Ask staff, volunteers and members to keep a six-foot distance from those who are sick.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to return home and away from others until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. Expect sick staff to be out for about 3 to 5 days, even if antivirals are used.
- Advise staff, volunteers and members to check with their health care provider about any special care they might need related to pregnancy or chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma or emphysema.

- Call for emergency medical services (911) if the ill person develops any emergency warning signs, including difficulty breathing, chest pain, lips turn purple or blue, severe vomiting or are unable to keep liquids down, signs of dehydration, seizures, employee is less responsive than normal or becomes confused.

### What additional cleaning should be done?

Sites should continue routine cleaning practices, with a focus on surfaces and other items that have frequent hand contact, especially in common areas and work stations. Additional disinfection is not currently recommended.

### Will facilities be closed to slow the spread of H1N1?

Currently, facility closure is not recommended. If a large number of flu-like illnesses occur, organizations should consult with state and local health officials about an appropriate response.

### Is it safe to hold a public gathering?

- The CDC is not recommending cancellation of public events at this time.
- Event organizers should remind potential participants to stay home if they are sick. Persons should stay home if they have flu-like symptoms, including fever. Persons with fever should stay home until 24 hours after their fever or fever-like symptoms have gone away.
- Persons who are at high risk of complications from H1N1, like pregnant women or those with previous health conditions, should consider staying away from public gatherings.
- Use newsletters, letters, websites, text messages, and announcements before and at events to remind attendees of good hygienic practices.
- Currently masks are not recommended for participants in public gatherings. Prior to holding a public gathering, monitor the CDC guidance on public gatherings: [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/public\\_gatherings.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/public_gatherings.htm)

### What are suggested methods to communicate to staff, volunteers and members about flu?

- Post fact sheets and posters in common areas.
- Create tools to communicate up-to-date and reliable information to staff, volunteers and members. Phone trees, mailed newsletters, and prerecorded messages on designated call-in phone numbers are ways that organizations can communicate with people who have no internet access.
- Consider your organization's unique position to address rumors, misinformation, fear and anxiety.

### Additional Resources

Twitter: Flu symptom update  
<http://bit.ly/hvsaS>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Social media tools  
<http://www.cdc.gov/SocialMedia/Campaigns/H1N1>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Information for shelters  
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homeless.htm>

Pandemic Flu: Community planning  
<http://flu.gov/professional/community/index.html>

Pandemic Flu: A Guide for Community and Faith-based Organizations  
<http://flu.gov/professional/community/cfboguidance.html>

*For more information on Faith and Community-based Organizations and H1N1, call the City of Milwaukee Health Department at 414-286-3521.*