

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about H1N1 Flu:

Healthcare Settings

What is novel H1N1?

- H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease, similar to the regular seasonal 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 that could result in death.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1?

- Signs of flu include having two or more of these symptoms: fever, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat and cough, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue.

Should healthcare providers be vaccinated?

- Healthcare providers are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated for H1N1 flu when the vaccine becomes available later in the fall.
- They are especially encouraged to be vaccinated if they work with:
 - Pregnant women
 - People with chronic medical conditions
 - Any person age 0 (newborn) through 24 years of age

What steps can healthcare providers take to stay healthy and keep from infecting others?

- Stay home if sick and until at least 7 days after a fever or fever-like symptoms (chills, feeling warm or flushed, sweating) have passed. The reduction of a fever should occur without use of medications like Tylenol® or Advil®. Stay home even if on antiviral medications but still have a fever.
- Use infection control practices at work and at home such as proper hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
- Use tissues, disinfectants, and disposable towels to clean commonly used surfaces, as well as appropriate disposal receptacles.

What other steps can health care facilities take to prepare for H1N1?

- Review your current pandemic flu plan. This might include testing of key components or updating any elements with H1N1 specific information. Share your plans and clearly communicate expectations.
- Monitor absenteeism throughout the fall and winter. Be ready to compare these numbers to your facilities' usual seasonal absenteeism rates.
- Identify essential healthcare personnel, essential functions, and other critical inputs required to maintain operations should there be disruptions during the pandemic influenza A (H1N1) flu outbreak.
- Review interim recommendations for facemask and respirator use in healthcare settings.
- Be prepared for the effect school and childcare closures may have on absenteeism. Schools and childcare programs may close, particularly if the severity increases.

What factors should be healthcare facilities considered when making H1N1-related decisions?

- Healthcare facilities should consider the local H1N1 environment, including disease severity, number of sick individuals in the community, employee absenteeism, impact of disease on individuals at higher-risk of getting the disease, and school/daycare closure possibilities.

What should be done if a healthcare provider develops symptoms of H1N1 while at the healthcare facility?

- Employees who become sick at work should be separated from other personnel and patients/clients. They should also be encouraged to go home until their symptoms resolve. Have them wear a mask if they can tolerate it.

- Employees should stay home until at least 7 days after they no longer have a fever (temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever, like chills, feeling warm, sweating or looking flushed. The fever should go away without the use of a fever-reducing medication like Tylenol® or Advil®.

What should be done for co-workers of an employee who is a suspected or confirmed case of novel influenza A (H1N1) flu?

- Inform the employees of their exposure to a co-worker with confirmed or suspected pandemic H1N1 flu during the ill person's infectious period. Make sure to maintain confidentiality of the sick co-worker.
- Have the employees monitor themselves for symptoms.
- Advise employees 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.

What should be done if a patient/client displays symptoms of H1N1 while at the healthcare facility?

- Patients/Clients should be separated from other personnel and patients/clients. They should be encouraged to go home, or they should be placed in a private room. If a private room is not available, the patient should be placed in a room where the roommate is at least 6 feet away.
- All healthcare providers should wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (gloves, gowns, goggles or other protective eye wear) every time they enter the patient's room.
- Use infection control practices such as proper hand washing after removing protective garments.
- Respond immediately if the ill person develops any emergency warning signs, including difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or chest pain, lips turn purple or blue (called discoloration of the lips), severe vomiting or are unable to keep liquids down, signs of dehydration, seizures, client/patient is less responsive than normal or becomes confused, or flu-like symptoms that improve but return with a fever and a worse cough

Who should be tested for H1N1?

The MHD recommends that testing for novel H1N1 influenza virus in Milwaukee should be limited to only:

- Individuals with “moderate to severe” symptoms (see description below), or
- Health care workers (HCWs) with influenza-like illness regardless of severity, or
- Clusters of people with influenza-like illness (ILI) living in congregate living facilities (e.g., nursing homes, jails, etc.)

For influenza-like illness (ILI), “moderate to severe symptoms” is determined by clinical judgment, but for purposes of this guidance generally includes:

- temperature ≥ 101.5 °F (38.6 °C), AND
- significant symptoms consistent with respiratory illness (e.g., prominent cough, sore throat), AND significant constitutional symptoms (e.g., headache, lethargy)

Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Actions for Medical Offices and Outpatient facilities

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/10steps.htm>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Guidance for Healthcare setting:

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm

Pandemic Flu: Novel H1N1 Flu Information for Health Care Providers

<http://pandemic.wisconsin.gov/category.asp?linkcatid=3124&linkid=903&locid=106>

For more information on Higher Education Institutions and H1N1, call the City of Milwaukee Health Department at 414-286-3521.