

H1N1 Influenza A (Human Swine Flu) Update

Last Update June 25 2009

The World Health Organization (WHO) has moved the influenza pandemic alert from phase 5 to phase 6, declaring a world influenza pandemic. The decision by the WHO to move to phase 6 is an indication of sustained community spread of the virus in more than one continental region, and not the severity of illness. To date, the H1N1 virus has shown its ability to spread from person-to-person, but it has also proven to be mild in most cases. Although the world is now officially experiencing an influenza pandemic, there is no substantial increase in illness in our local communities and no further action is required at this point in time.

Locally there have been three lab confirmed cases of novel H1N1 Influenza A virus reported in Hastings & Prince Edward Counties. All individuals exhibited mild symptoms and have fully recovered. As of June 22nd, there have been over 2660 lab-confirmed cases of novel H1N1 Influenza A virus identified in Ontario. Nearly all of these cases have been considered mild. There have been a total of seven deaths in people with the H1N1 virus in Ontario, most of whom had underlying chronic medical conditions.

The Health Unit continues to communicate with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Public Health Agency of Canada to closely monitor the outbreak of novel H1N1 Influenza A.

Please note, the H1N1 Influenza A strain is proving to be less severe with a lower transmission rate than the regular seasonal influenza. H1N1 Influenza A is respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal flu. The symptoms include:

- fever
- fatigue
- lack of appetite
- coughing
- sore throat
- runny nose
- muscle aches
- watery eyes

Some individuals may also experience:

- vomiting
- diarrhea

The message remains the same: To help prevent the spread of infection, we are advising:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home from work or school and limit contact with others if you get sick.
- Call your local health care provider if you are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

For more information on H1N1 Influenza A visit the following agencies' websites:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/ihn.html>

Hastings & Prince Edward County Health Unit - H1N1 Influenza FAQ's

http://www.hpechu.on.ca/applications/web_cms/index.php?pageid=494&menuid=2161