



A Workplace Guide to **Pandemic Influenza**

Live, Work and Play Well!

The June 2009 outbreak of the H1N1 virus has caused many individuals and employers to prepare for the possibility of a severe pandemic influenza. This guide is intended to provide an overview of relevant information for you and everyone at your workplace.

What is pandemic influenza?

Influenza (commonly referred to as “the flu”) is an infection in the lungs and airways. The difference between the common flu and a pandemic influenza occurs when a new influenza virus spread from human to human and circulates worldwide. Generally speaking, new strains of influenza are introduced to humans every year. Even though the virus changes slightly from year to year, most people have some general immunity and therefore protection to the virus. Pandemic viruses are different because the virus is a completely different strain and most humans do not have any pre-existing immunity against the virus. Without this existing immunity it is more likely for complications to occur.

Why do scientists expect another pandemic influenza?

Through history there have been several pandemics, including the Spanish influenza (1918-1919), the Asian influenza (1957-1958) and the Hong Kong Influenza (1968-1969). Based on the history of the H1N1 virus scientists expect another pandemic.

How would a pandemic influenza affect Canadians?

Based on statistical analysis and the two most recent pandemics, when a virus is detected anywhere in the world it reaches Canada within 3 months and has its maximum effect with 5-7 months. During this time, early warning systems ensure the Canadian Health Authorities have the maximum amount of time to develop and produce vaccinations against the new strain of the virus. Outside of pandemic influenza, 1500-4500 individuals die every year. This is why the flu vaccine is recommended for most individuals.

What about Vaccination shortages?

The Canadian government has ordered enough double doses to inoculate our entire population against the H1N1 virus. Canadians should not be concerned about shortages of the H1N1 vaccination. "For us it won't be whether they're immunized or not. It will be whether they're immunized or not today, when it comes to that time, or three weeks or four weeks later," said Dr. David Butler-Jones, head of the Public Health Agency of Canada.



Seasonal Influenza Vaccine

Canadians 6 months and older should receive the seasonal influenza vaccine (commonly called “the flu shot”). Individuals who are especially urged and may be eligible for a free publically funded immunization are:

- Children 6-23 months
- People 65 years and older
- People in nursing homes, lodges, chronic care facilities, homeless shelters or any individual in chronically disadvantaged situations.
- People with heart or lung conditions, diabetes or other metabolic diseases, cancer or a weakened immune system, (including HIV) kidney disease and anaemia or hemoglobinopathy.
- Health Care providers and other care givers.

For more information on how to obtain “the flu shot” please go to:

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

Pneumococcal (Pneumonia) Vaccine

A common complication that occurs in conjunction with any influenza is Pneumonia. Pneumonia increases the chances of your health situation becoming dangerous. A vaccination against Pneumonia is available and decreases your chances of complication due to any influenza. Most Canadians will have received this vaccination as part of their routine immunizations as a child. Most people only need to receive this vaccine once in their lifetime. If you are unsure if you have been inoculated or not, you can obtain a copy of your immunization record through your local public health authority.

<http://www.cpha.ca/en/about/offices.aspx>

Be Prepared

Everyone should plan ahead in case they become ill with influenza. This is especially important if you live alone, are a single parent or a caregiver.

- Have enough supplies on hand to last at least two weeks (tissue, food, water, medication, fever medication)
- Arrange for a back up caregiver in case you are ill



How can I determine whether or not I have influenza?

Description	Respiratory Infection		Gastrointestinal Infection
Symptoms	Influenza	Common Cold	Stomach Upset
Virus Involved	Influenza A or B (H1N1 is type A)	Many different viruses such as rhinovirus, coronavirus, adenovirus, etc	Norovirus is the most common
Fever	Usually high, beginning suddenly and lasting 3-4 days	Sometimes	Rarely
Headache	Usually, can be severe	Rarely	Sometimes
Chills, aches, pain	Usually and often severe	Rarely	Common
Loss of appetite	Sometimes. Pandemic H1N1 influenza symptoms may also include nausea vomiting and diarrhoea.	Sometimes	Frequently- usually nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea occur as well.
Cough	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely
Sore throat	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rarely
Sniffles or sneezes	Sometimes	Usually	Rarely
Extreme tiredness	Usually- tiredness may last 2-3 weeks or more	Rarely	Sometimes
Involves whole body	Usually	Never	Stomach and bowel only
Symptoms appear quickly	Yes	More gradual	Yes
Possible Complications	Pneumonia, kidney failure, swelling of the brain and death.	Sinus infection or ear infection	Dehydration (losing more fluid that you take in)
Vaccine	Yearly vaccine protection against 2 influenza A strains and 1 influenza B strain.	No vaccine available	No vaccine available.

Obtained from Alberta Health Services



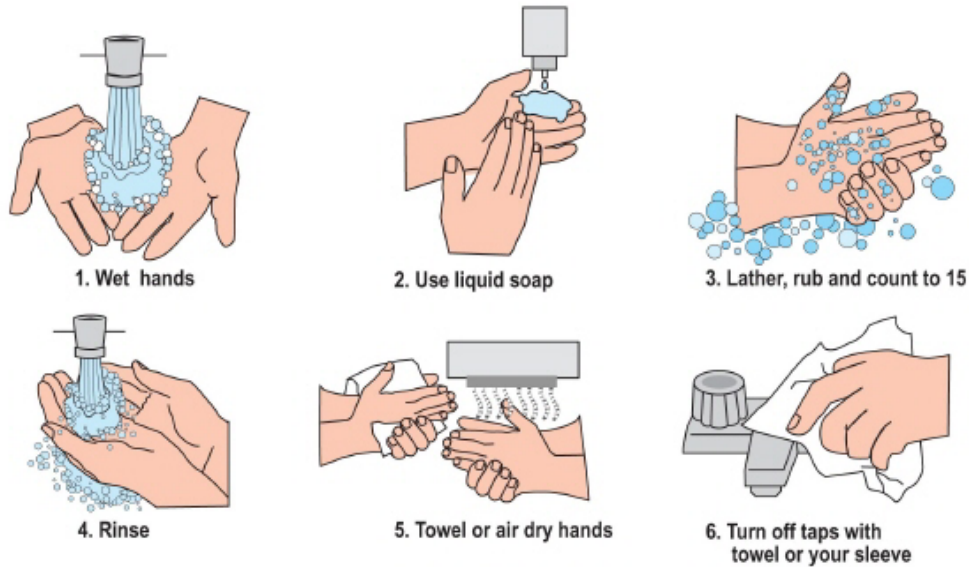
Prevention and Reducing the Spread

1) Choose to Immunize

See above sections.

2) Clean your Hands

Proper Hand Washing Technique



Proper Use of an Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer

Alcohol-based hand sanitizers — which don't require water — are an excellent alternative to hand washing, particularly when soap and water aren't available. They're actually more effective than soap and water in killing bacteria and viruses that cause disease. Commercially prepared hand sanitizers contain ingredients that help prevent skin dryness. Using these products can result in less skin dryness and irritation than hand washing. Not all hand sanitizers are created equal, though. Some "waterless" hand sanitizers don't contain alcohol. Use only the alcohol-based products. The CDC recommends choosing products that contain at least 60 percent alcohol.

To use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer:

- Apply about 1/2 teaspoon of the product to the palm of your hand.
- Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands, until they're dry.

If your hands are visibly dirty, however, wash with soap and water, if available, rather than a sanitizer.



3) Cover Your Cough

- Cover your nose and mouth **with a tissue** when coughing or sneezing
- Throw away tissues after wiping your nose or covering a cough.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your arm **not into your hands.**
- Clean your hands after coughing, sneezing or using tissues.



4) Diet

You can't see it, but chances are your immune system is at work right now, wiping out armies of bacteria and viruses that can cause all sorts of ailments. Every day your defense system fights off disease and infection. Eating a healthy diet will bolster your immune system and make it stronger at fighting off viruses like the influenza.

Canada Food Guide:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/alt_formats/hpfb-dgpsa/pdf/food-guide-aliment/view_eatwell_vue_bienmang-eng.pdf

5) Consider Supplements

Over 90% of Canadians do not get the daily required amounts of vitamins and minerals they need to help them stay healthy. That is why supplements are a great way to boost your immunity and stay healthy.

Consider:

- A recommended daily multivitamin
- A source of Omega fatty acids such as Wild Salmon Oil
- Calcium and vitamin D
- A source of pro biotic bacteria.
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For more info: www.humanalife.ca

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** Consult with your physician to determine the best supplements for your health*



6) Sleep

Most people can feel the effect that not getting enough rest can have. In addition to lowering immunity, lack of sleep can prevent your body from being able to repair itself. Adults need from 8 to 10 hours of sleep nightly.

Here are some additional **tips to help you sleep**:

- Keep a regular sleep-wake cycle. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine in the four to six hours before bedtime
- Don't exercise within two hours of bedtime. Exercising five or six hours before bedtime may help you sleep more soundly
- Don't eat large meals within two hours of bedtime
- Don't nap later than 3 p.m.
- Sleep in a dark, quiet room with a comfortable temperature
- If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes, do a quiet activity somewhere else and return to bed when you're sleepy
- Wind down in the 30 minutes before bedtime with a relaxing pre sleep ritual such as a warm bath, soft music, or reading

For more info: www.humanalife.ca

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7) Reducing Stress

We have known for some time that stress affects our immune systems. Many studies have shown that stress can suppress the immune system, but other studies have shown boosts in the immune system under stress.

- **Short-term stressors boost the immune system.** It seems that the "fight or flight" response prompts the immune system to ready itself for infections resulting from bites, punctures, scrapes or other challenges to the integrity of the body.
- **Chronic, long-term stress suppresses the immune system.** The longer the stress, the more the immune system shifts from the adaptive changes seen in the "[fight or flight](#)" response to more negative changes, first at the cellular level and later in broader immune function. The most chronic stressors – stress that seems beyond a person's control or seems endless – results in the most global suppression of immunity. Almost all measures of immune system function drop across the board.

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8) Minimize your exposure

- Avoid crowds when possible
- Visit those who have influenza only if necessary and stand 2 meters (6 feet) away from them
- Stay home from work, school running errands and other activities when ill
- Keep personal items separate if a household member or co-worker is sick. Clean surfaces around them often with a detergent cleanser
- Do not share personal items or drinks
- Clean shared surfaces such as door handles, light switches, telephones, computer keyboards etc. frequently
- Keep you hands and fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth

Questions to Ask Yourself in the Workplace:

- What job tasks increase potential exposure to the pandemic influenza virus in the workplace?
- How can we decrease the risk?
- Do we have the appropriate resources to decrease the risk?
- Can we obtain additional resources to reduce the risk?
- What jobs can become unessential in a pandemic situation when many workers may be off ill?
- How will cover off be determined?
- Does our company provide paid sick days? If not, do I have emergency savings to cover expenses?
- Are there ways in which employees can complete essential work from home?
- Do we have the resources/ technology to allow employees to work from home?
- Can we obtain additional technology/ resources to allow individuals to work from home?



Is your workplace prepared?

- ☐ Practice social distancing by keeping a distance from anyone with Flu like symptoms
- ☐ Provide partitions where ever possible.
- ☐ Influenza viruses can live up to 2 days on hard surfaces. Regular cleaning with household cleaners and products will inactivate them. Surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned often – preferably daily
- ☐ Shared workstations and equipment should be cleaned with regular household cleaners when individuals are changing work stations
- ☐ Thoroughly wash cups, dishes and cutlery with soap and hot water after individual use, in a dishwasher if possible
- ☐ Discourage workers from sharing phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment as possible
- ☐ Workers are to report any symptoms of pandemic influenza to their supervisors and should not come to work when they are exhibiting any influenza symptoms. Individuals experiencing symptoms of pandemic influenza should call their local health authority. Workers who are ill should stay at home until symptoms resolve.
- ☐ Set up a process for ensuring that ill employees have completed any required isolation period and are healthy before allowing them to return to work
- ☐ Return to work will be based on fitness-to-work policy established as part of pandemic emergency response plan
- ☐ Reduce employee interpersonal exposure
- ☐ Reduce close contact with customers or co-workers through the use of physical barriers when possible; increase use of mail, fax, telephone, or email communication
- ☐ Postpone customer interactions
- ☐ When customer service must be done in person consider creating a buffer zone of at least 2 metres between an employee and a customer and keep meetings as short as possible
- ☐ Work from home whenever possible



- ☐ Assignment of immuno-compromised or pregnant workers to lower pandemic influenza exposure job tasks
- ☐ Avoid locations or activities that may represent a high risk of exposure to influenza
- ☐ Seek and follow travel advice provided by public health officials
- ☐ Currently, there is no pandemic influenza vaccine available. The vaccine for pandemic influenza can be produced only after the virus has been identified. Once identified, it will take approximately 4 – 6 months to produce the new pandemic influenza vaccine
- ☐ When available, the new vaccine will be distributed based on national priority groups outlined in the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector. The criteria for the national priority groups take into account work duties, roles, and exposure risk. See Useful References for the Public Health Agency of Canada website
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>
- ☐ Prophylactic antiviral medications (for example, Tamiflu) that have shown some effectiveness in slowing or minimizing seasonal influenza virus, may be limited in prevention usefulness and availability for pandemic influenza. The Public Health Agency of Canada makes recommendation for the use of antiviral drugs



How will HumanaCare assist in a Pandemic?

In an emergency situation HumanaCare will still be ready to assist! Although in a pandemic situation face to face services may not be available HumanaCare is equipped to provide telephonic and online video counseling. With a vast network of professional across North America, you can be reassured that we will have personnel standing by to assist.

We will also provide tools and guides, such as this to support you and your workplace with common issues, stressors and experiences.

Please call us if you have any questions:

1.800.661.8193

Pandemic Workplace Training

Is your team ready? A HumanaCare specialist will come to your workplace to help you proactively address the individual and workplace concerns of a pandemic or epidemic influenza. Please call to arrange a date and time.



1hr \$300

Flu Protection Kits and Pandemic Preparedness Solutions

Workplace Preparedness Kit (25 employees)

\$375

One sick employee can easily infect five others, who then infect five others, causing a costly chain of infection. Now there's a program called "Healthy Office" which can dramatically increase the productivity gains associated with increased 'presenteeism'.

Personal Pandemic Preparedness Kit

\$115

Family Pandemic Preparedness Kit

\$120

Travel Pandemic Preparedness Kit

\$20

Kits contain varying amounts of the following: NIOSH N95 certified Respirator-Mask, Single-use Clinical Thermometer, Antiseptic (waterless) Hand Wash, personal Anti-microbial wipes, pair of medical latex-free gloves, Protective Eye Shield, Hospital Grade Nailbrush Nonwoven "overshoe" booties (in pairs) and Bio hazard Bags

