

Influenza Tool Kit

2009-2010 Issue 1

H1N1 (human swine influenza) and Seasonal Influenza:

College and University Administrators



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Note:

Both seasonal influenza and H1N1 (human swine influenza) are present in Nova Scotia. This document will help you address questions from students, staff and faculty regarding both seasonal influenza and H1N1. Following the recommendations included in these guidelines will help to prevent and minimize the spread of influenza both in the classroom setting and in residences, while protecting the health of students, staff and faculty.



Guidelines for Management of Influenza in Colleges or Universities

- Remind staff, students and faculty about the **importance** of frequent handwashing, coughing or sneezing into their sleeves or arms, and not sharing drinks, mouth guards, cigarettes, cosmetics etc. Tissues can be used to cover coughs and sneezes but be sure to wash your hands after throwing out the tissue. These are **crucial** steps in helping to stop the spread of the virus.
- Encourage students, staff and faculty to wash their hands:
 - Before eating food;
 - Before and after preparing food;
 - After using toilet;
 - After blowing nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Consider increasing the number of hand wash stations or 60-90% alcohol based hand sanitizer stations as well as tissues and waste receptacles on campus. It is recommended that additional tissue supplies and waste receptacles be kept in supervised areas (i.e. classrooms). If alcohol based hand sanitizers are provided to supplement handwashing facilities, locked dispensers that are permanently attached to a wall are recommended and should be located in supervised areas.

It should be noted that hand washing with soap and water is the best method of hand hygiene in colleges and universities as the scrubbing action is effective at removing visible soil as well as microbes. In instances where hand washing sinks are not available, use of alcohol based hand sanitizers may be considered. Please note that if hands are visibly soiled, alcohol based hand rubs may not be effective at eliminating the influenza virus.

- Cleaning objects and high touch surfaces that are commonly touched by students, staff and faculty such as doorknobs, faucet handles, sports equipments, computer keyboards, telephones, etc. will help prevent the spread of the viruses.

High touch surfaces should be cleaned at least once daily. No special disinfectants are required; regular cleaning products are sufficient for this purpose. Cleaning personnel should be educated and trained on proper cleaning techniques as per university/college policy. Universities and colleges should increase the frequency of cleaning during school hours and frequently replenish soap, paper towels and other hand washing supplies.

- Symptoms of both seasonal influenza and H1N1 (human swine influenza) are similar. They are fever and/or cough, along with one or more of the following:
 - Unusual tiredness;
 - Headaches;
 - Muscle aches or joint aches;
 - Sore throat;
 - Vomiting and diarrhea in children less than 5 years of age.



- Students, staff and faculty who are ill with influenza-like symptoms, regardless of whether it may be seasonal influenza or H1N1, should:
 - Remain at home until they are symptom-free, feeling well and able to resume normal day-to-day activities;
 - Avoid close contact with others;
 - See a health care practitioner if symptoms worsen.

It is important that pregnant women speak to a health care practitioner if they develop influenza-like symptoms. Like any illness, should symptoms worsen, they should visit a doctor, walk in clinic, or university health services.

Individuals who are at increased risk for complications from influenza, such as people with weakened immune systems, breathing or heart conditions, should watch their symptoms closely and see a health care practitioner if they worsen.

- Encourage seasonal influenza vaccination for anyone who is eligible.
- Encourage H1N1 vaccine when available.
 - Advise staff and parents that further information is available at www.gov.ns.ca/hpp
 - If you have other questions, please contact your local Public Health office <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/contacts/phs-offices.asp>

Other measures universities and colleges can implement are:

- Identify ways to receive illness reports from students, staff and faculty (i.e. dedicated phone line, web-based method);
- Record reports of illness and symptoms and consider methods of detecting widespread illness in students, staff and faculty;
- Maintain good communication with local public health services for guidance;
- Report absenteeism in excess of 10% of students and/or staff to local public health services. There is no need to report one confirmed case of influenza;
- Consider cohorting campus residents with influenza-like illness, as a measure to contain the spread of the virus, for on campus residences.

University and College Closures

- It is NOT recommended that universities/colleges close proactively in anticipation of disease or outbreaks.
- Closing a university/college in response to seasonal influenza and H1N1 activity is unlikely to be effective and should only be considered on a case by case basis after discussion with the Medical Officer of Health.

This information is consistent with the Public Health Agency of Canada's recommendations (see <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/h1n1/hp-ps/psili-eng.php> for more information).



General Information about Seasonal Influenza and H1N1 (human swine influenza) for College and University Administrators, Students and Faculty

What are seasonal influenza and H1N1?

Both seasonal influenza and H1N1 are acute viral illnesses of the respiratory tract. There are various strains of influenza; H1N1 is a new type.

What are the symptoms of seasonal influenza and H1N1?

Seasonal influenza and H1N1 share the same set of symptoms. They are fever and/or cough, and one or more of the following:

- Unusual tiredness;
- Headache;
- Muscle or joint aches;
- Sore throat;
- Vomiting and diarrhea in children less than 5 years of age.

How are seasonal influenza and H1N1 spread?

Coughs and sneezes release germs into the air where they can be breathed in by others.

Germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands and transferred to the lungs when someone touches their mouth and/or nose.

How can I prevent the spread of seasonal influenza and H1N1?

- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use 60-90% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve. Tissues can be used to cover coughs and sneezes but be sure to wash your hands after throwing out the tissue;
- Do not share drinking glasses, water bottles, lipsticks, cosmetics, mouth guards or eating utensils;
- If you are sick, stay home from work or university/college. Avoid close contact with others until you are symptom-free, feeling well and able to resume normal day-to-day activities.

If students, staff or faculty are feeling sick, what should they do?

If ill with influenza-like symptoms students, staff or faculty should stay home from work or school. They should avoid close contact with others until symptom-free, feeling well and able to resume normal day-to-day activities. For further information and advice contact HealthLink 811. Like any illness, should symptoms worsen, they should visit a doctor, walk in clinic or university health services.



What about pregnant students, staff or faculty?

Pregnant women are at higher risk of complications if they get H1N1 (human swine influenza), so they should speak to a health care practitioner if they develop symptoms. Like any illness, should symptoms worsen, they should visit a doctor, walk-in clinic or university health services.

What about other high-risk individuals?

Individuals who are at increased risk for complications from influenza, such as people with weakened immune systems, breathing or heart conditions, should watch their symptoms closely and see a health care practitioner if they worsen.

Should staff, students or faculty with symptoms of influenza be tested for H1N1?

H1N1 testing is not necessary. If students, staff or faculty have influenza symptoms, tell them to stay home from work, university/college or other social settings. They should avoid close contact with others until symptom-free, feeling well and able to resume normal day-to-day activities. Should their symptoms worsen, they should see a doctor, walk-in clinic or university health services.

What is the treatment for seasonal influenza and H1N1?

Because seasonal and H1N1 (human swine influenza) are caused by a virus, antibiotics are not effective. Antiviral medications can sometimes help lessen influenza symptoms, but they require a prescription.

Who will be treated?

Treatment (if any) will vary depending upon the situation. Physicians will decide about treatment on a case-by-case basis.

If students, staff or faculty have been in contact with someone who has influenza, and are NOT feeling sick, what should they do?

They should go about their daily routine as usual. If symptoms begin, follow the advice above.

Should colleges or universities be closed or college or university events cancelled if a student, staff member or faculty has been diagnosed with, or in contact with someone who has, H1N1 or seasonal influenza?

No. There is no evidence to suggest that closing colleges or universities or cancelling events would help stop the spread of the virus.

Should masks be worn?

The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend the public wear masks to protect against seasonal influenza or H1N1. Evidence shows that masks are not effective in preventing the spread of influenza viruses. People often wear them incorrectly, or contaminate them when putting them on and taking them off, which could increase the risk of illness.



Hand Washing!



Wash all parts of your hands:

- The backs
- Between fingers
- Under nails
- Thumbs

Wash your hands:

- Before eating
- After using the toilet
- Before, during and after cooking
- After changing diapers
- After handling soiled items such as bed linen, commodes, clothing, and toys
- After petting animals

Washing your hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the spread of germs.