



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

October 9, 2009

To: All Department Heads

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

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GUIDANCE ON HANDLING OF EMPLOYEES WHO REPORT TO WORK ILL

Numerous media reports concerning pandemic H1N1 (formerly known as swine flu) have increased concern in the population and in the County workforce regarding their health and that of their family members. The enclosed fact sheet (Attachment 1) from the Department of Public Health (DPH) indicates that H1N1 is not expected to cause serious illness at rates higher than seasonal influenza. However, a small percentage of children and younger adults who contract this have serious complications which can sometimes lead to death. Because the H1N1 virus is a new strain and because DPH recommends sick persons stay away from others while they are sick, the County is providing general guidance to departments regarding how to handle employees who appear to be ill at the workplace.

The County has an obligation to provide a safe and healthy work environment to its employees. Employees who are ill generally choose not to report to work. However, an employee may not feel ill or believes that he/she is well, but nevertheless exhibits signs of illness that concern management and that potentially could distress others in the workplace. In some instances, an ill employee may report to work because he/she has no paid time on the books.

If an employee is or appears to be ill in the workplace, it is important for management to talk to the employee. The employee should be encouraged to go home and stay home until 24 hours after the symptoms he/she is exhibiting disappear. During this period of significant H1N1 infection rates, workers should be encouraged to stay home and not return to work until they have been well for at least 24 hours. Management and supervisors should consider waiving standing requirements to obtain a physician note for any absence of three or more days in duration. The importance of resting and drinking fluids while ill should be highlighted. Employees should be instructed to seek medical attention immediately if they experience any of the following severe symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or ongoing vomiting

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

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The employee's absence should be covered by such paid time as he/she has on the books, or, if there is no paid time, the employee should be approved for unpaid time-off. Alternative telework schedules may also be considered when appropriate.

There may be rare instances when an employee refuses to follow management's suggestions to go home or claims to be healthy in spite of the symptoms he/she is exhibiting. It must be kept in mind that only a health care professional can diagnose a medical condition. With this in mind, the employee should be immediately directed to the appropriate CEO Occupational Health Program Contracted Clinic for an assessment to determine if the employee is potentially contagious. Should the physician conclude that the employee is ill and contagious, the employee can be ordered to leave the worksite. If the medical opinion is that the employee is not ill, he/she can return to the workplace, and the County has fulfilled its obligation to make reasonable efforts to protect the health of other employees.

Finally, if having the employee evaluated by a medical clinic is not practicable, and the employee exhibits obvious symptoms of illness, management should carefully document all observations and symptoms and can send the employee home, either on the employee's paid time if available or on approved unpaid time off. This option should only be utilized after review by appropriate upper management and/or human resources staff.

Getting a flu vaccine is the most effective method to prevent the flu. People six months or older are generally able to get the seasonal flu vaccine. Persons included in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's H1N1 vaccine target groups should get the H1N1 vaccine. These groups include: pregnant women, people who live with, or care for, children younger than six months of age, health care and emergency services personnel, persons between the ages of six months through 24 years of age, and people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for pandemic H1N1 flu infection because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

All employees should be encouraged to practice healthy behaviors such as covering a cough or sneeze with a tissue, washing hands frequently, and avoiding exposure to others who appear to be ill at all times of the year. Attachment 2 is a handout titled, "Keeping Your Facility Healthy."

If you have any questions, please contact Steve Nyblom, Manager CEO, at (213) 738-2214 or snyblom@ceo.lacounty.gov

WTF:EFS:ef

Attachments

c: Each Supervisor

Pandemic H1N1 UPDATE

KEEPING PARTNERS INFORMED ABOUT PANDEMIC H1N1 IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Welcome to Pandemic H1N1 Update! This monthly publication provides timely and credible information from the Department of Public Health for Los Angeles County community groups and residents.

H1N1 Vaccine News: Who Should Get the Vaccine and Why

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified priority groups for the H1N1 vaccine (shot). The list below describes why some groups should get the H1N1 vaccine first:

- **Pregnant women** have higher risk for medical problems (complications) caused by H1N1 and may provide protection (immunity) to their babies.
- **People who live with or care for babies less than 6 months old** are more likely to spread H1N1 to babies that are at higher risk for complications and are too young to get the vaccine.
- **Children and young adults 6 months to 24 years old** are more likely to spread H1N1 at daycares, schools and other locations in their community.
- **People 25 to 64**

years old that have a chronic medical problem, like asthma, have higher risk for complications caused by H1N1.

- **Healthcare & emergency medical workers that work directly with patients** are more likely to spread H1N1 to their patients and need to stay healthy to help sick patients.

Vaccine studies are still taking place. CDC expects H1N1 vaccine will be a single shot, available in October at:

- Private settings like doctors' offices and clinics
- Retail settings like pharmacies
- Public Health vaccine clinics for clients that don't have health insurance

Seasonal flu can still make you sick. Decrease your risk for seasonal flu by getting a seasonal flu shot, **especially if you're 65 and older**. Seasonal flu vaccine calendar available at: <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip/flu/index.htm>



PANDEMIC H1N1 VACCINE PRIORITY GROUPS

Pregnant women

People living with or caring for infants under 6 months of age

Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years

People aged 25-64 with a chronic medical condition

Healthcare and emergency medical workers with direct patient contact

Preventing H1N1 or Seasonal Flu

No matter the virus, preventing the flu requires little effort. Follow these tips to stay healthy:

- **Cover** your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- **Wash** your hands often with soap and water. Gel sanitizers (such as Purell®) are also effective.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, or mouth since germs spread that way.
- **Avoid close contact** with sick people.
- **If you're sick, stay home** and rest for at least 24 hours after fever ends.



Pandemic H1N1 Status Report

CDC collects information like the number of doctors visits, hospital stays, or deaths caused by H1N1 complications to create weekly flu reports. These reports show that H1N1 is **currently**:

- Causing seasonal flu symptoms like fever, coughing, and tiredness and is more likely than seasonal flu to cause vomiting and diarrhea.
- Mostly making people ages 25 or younger sick.
- Mostly causing hospital stays and complications in children ages 0 to 4 years old, pregnant women, and in people with asthma, diabetes, heart disease or obesity.
- Causing similar or fewer hospital stays than seasonal flu, but more than usual for this time of year.



- Not sending as many people to the doctor as it was in April but, it's still causing more doctors visits than usual for this time of year.
- Not making people ages 65 and older sick like seasonal flu does. This age group may have been exposed to a similar virus in the past which protects them from getting sick.
- Not causing more flu-related deaths than usual for this time of year.

Pandemic H1N1 flu is not exactly like seasonal flu and **may change** even more during the October through March flu season. To stay healthy, keep informed, create back-up plans to care for sick family members, and practice good habits like hand washing. Visit www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly to read FluView, CDC's weekly flu report.

When is Flu Serious?

H1N1 flu and seasonal flu symptoms are similar. They include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. People with H1N1 flu also have diarrhea and vomiting. These symptoms get better without seeing a doctor. But, some symptoms can be dangerous.



Go to the doctor if you have any of these **SEVERE SYMPTOMS**:

SEVERE SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN
Fast or difficulty breathing
Purple or bluish skin
Unable to drink enough liquids
Unable to wake up or respond
Irritability
Fever or skin rash

SEVERE SYMPTOMS IN ADULTS
Difficulty breathing
Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
Sudden dizziness
Confusion
Severe or ongoing vomiting

Pandemic H1N1: What do you know?

1. Who should get the Pandemic H1N1 Vaccine?

- A. Pregnant women
- B. People ages 6 months to 24 years
- C. People ages 65 and older
- D. Answers A and B

2. The best treatment for Pandemic H1N1 is...?

- A. Taking aspirin
- B. Getting rest and drinking fluids
- C. Taking antibiotics
- D. Taking antivirals

3. The best way to prevent Pandemic H1N1 is...?

- A. Getting a H1N1 shot if you're in one of the priority groups
- B. Wearing a mask
- C. Cleaning your house with bleach at least once a week
- D. Taking antivirals

Answers: 1. D, 2. B, 3. A

H1N1 Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

(800) CDC-INFO or (800) 232-4636
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm

California Department of Public Health

(888) 865-0564

www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

Healthcare services: Dial 2-1-1

Speaker Requests and Materials:
publichealth.lacounty.gov

DPH Update Listserv:

Email Listserv@listserv.ph.lacounty.gov and include "subscribe DPHUPDATE first name last name" in the subject line and body



Keeping your Facility Healthy

Encourage and model good hygiene habits

- **Avoid touching your eyes and mouth.**
- **Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.**
- **Wash hands often, using soap and warm water for 20 seconds. (When soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer).**



Follow these tips to help create a healthy environment at your facility and prevent the spread of diseases.

Practice good housekeeping habits at your facility

- Open windows to help maintain fresh air in shared areas.
- Provide tissue and hand sanitizer at entrances, desks, and other locations in your facility.
- Provide lined trash cans to throw away used tissues.
- Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a disinfectant several times a day.
- Keep common areas free from personal items by double-bagging them as people enter the facility.

Separate people who are sick

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. (Stay 3 feet away from them if you can).
- Encourage sick staff to stay home until 24 hours after their symptoms are gone.
- People who are sick should sleep and eat meals in a separate room (if possible).
- People who are sick should seek emergency medical care if they have:
 - ▶ Trouble breathing
 - ▶ Chest pain
 - ▶ Trouble keeping liquids down

Extra tips for residential facilities:

- Use a dishwasher or hot water and detergent to clean eating utensils.
- Avoid “hugging” dirty laundry when handling it to prevent contaminating yourself.
- Consider canceling or postponing group activities.
- Create physical barriers between beds using sheets or curtains.
- Arrange beds so that people lay head-to-toe relative to each other.

For more information visit www.ph.lacounty.gov



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health