

**HEALTH ADVISORY 1/2009
ADVICE ON INFLUENZA A (H1N1-2009)
FOR WORKPLACES**

(6 May 2009)

Scope

1. This advisory advises on the measures to be adopted in the face of a possible Influenza A (H1N1-2009) pandemic, in the absence of any local transmission, and will take effect from 7 May 2009.

Important Facts about Influenza A (H1N1-2009)

2. Influenza ("flu") is an infection caused by the influenza virus. Influenza A (H1N1-2009) virus (previously referred to as "swine flu") is a new strain of influenza virus that spreads from human to human in the same way as seasonal flu.
3. Flu can be spread when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. The flu viruses are transmitted into the air through droplets and may be inhaled by other people. When these viruses enter the nose, throat, or lungs of a person, they begin to multiply, causing symptoms of the flu, such as fever, cough, sore throat, running nose, muscle ache, fatigue and sometimes breathlessness. The viruses can also be spread indirectly when a person touches a surface contaminated with the flu viruses and then touches his nose or mouth, or when an infected person shares food with others without a serving spoon.
4. There are key differences between the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) virus and the SARS virus. In SARS, a person becomes infectious after the onset of fever. With the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) virus, victims can be infectious up to 24 hours before they develop fever or other visible symptoms. Moreover, one-third of the people infected with the virus do not show any symptoms or signs but they can still spread the virus.

General Advisory

5. To effectively manage the Influenza A (H1N1-2009) outbreak, all individuals are advised to maintain a high level of personal hygiene, such as by washing their hands regularly with soap and water, especially before touching the eyes, nose or mouth.

6. If one has to cough or sneeze, he should quickly turn away from people around him and avoid coughing or sneezing at anyone. He should cover his nose and mouth with a tissue and dispose it properly in a dust bin after use.
7. Individuals who are unwell but with no history of travel to affected areas¹ (i.e. areas with evidence of community transmission of Influenza A (H1N1-2009)) are advised to seek medical attention and stay home from work or school and avoid crowded places. These individuals should wear a surgical mask to cover their nose and mouth if they must go out.

Specific Advisory

Travel

8. Organizations should advise their staff to postpone non-essential travel to Mexico and other affected areas.
9. From 4 May 09, travellers who have been in Mexico in the last 7 days will be quarantined for up to 7 days on their return to Singapore and undergo phone surveillance for symptoms of Influenza A (H1N1-2009). Those who develop symptoms will be referred for a thorough assessment via a dedicated ambulance service (tel: 993) which will convey such patients to the Tan Tock Seng Hospital Emergency Department.
10. Travellers who have been in an affected area other than Mexico in the last 7 days should monitor their own health and watch out for any flu symptoms for 7 days from the time they left the affected place. They should call 993 for ambulance transport for medical assessment and treatment if they become unwell. **They can continue with their normal activities (e.g. go to school or work) if they remain well.**

Non-Healthcare Establishments

11. The recommendation for the screening of temperature, flu-like symptoms and travel/contact history of visitors at workplaces, schools, buildings and other places of mass gathering is lifted. There is also no need to record the particulars of visitors, beyond what is ordinarily required for security clearance.
12. The recommendation for twice-daily monitoring of temperature by staff is also lifted.

¹ Please refer to the MOH website www.moh.gov.sg for the most updated list of affected areas.

Healthcare Establishments

13. The current requirements for more stringent measures at healthcare establishments will continue for the time being, including the screening of temperature, flu-like symptoms and travel history of visitors.

Building up Response Capabilities and Capacity

14. Although we do not have any cases in Singapore now and we are lifting some preventive measures, organizations are urged to remain vigilant. We must be ready for combating this virus for the long haul if it does come to Singapore. Organizations are advised to start/continue building up their capabilities and capacity to effectively implement the various preventive measures when they are activated.

Further Information

15. For updates on this evolving situation, please refer to the MOH website www.moh.gov.sg.
16. For further clarifications of this circular, please email moh_info@moh.gov.sg.

[Please check the MOH website for the latest applicable advisory.]

Ministry of Health,
Singapore
