

Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) Questions and Answers for Daycare Staff (May 5, 2009)

Background

There have been a number of confirmed cases of Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) in Alberta. This influenza has been recognized as the cause of respiratory illness including some severe illness in Mexico. Related cases of mild Influenza A H1N1 have been recognized in many countries, including Canada. The situation continues to evolve rapidly and the advice provided below may change as new information becomes available.

Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) illness outside Mexico has generally been mild to date, much like usual seasonal influenza. The United States has reported one death in Texas related to this influenza.

1. What is Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza)?

The virus causing Human Swine Influenza is a new strain of Influenza A which can be transmitted from person to person. New strains of seasonal Influenza A circulate every year in flu season.

2. How is Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) spread?

Human-to-human spread of this influenza virus is thought to happen the same way as seasonal influenza and other respiratory infections. When the infected person coughs and sneezes, the viruses are released into the air where they can be breathed in by others. Viruses can also remain on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands and spread when someone touches their eyes, mouth and/or nose.

3. Should we close our daycare if we have a confirmed case of Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) in a child or a staff member?

In light of the current situation of the Influenza A H1N1 virus infection in Canada causing generally mild illness with symptoms similar to typical seasonal influenza, **the Public Health Agency of Canada is not recommending the closure of schools and daycare centres at this time.** This advice also applies even if a confirmed case is identified in a school or daycare centre. Ill children and staff should remain at home and seek medical attention as necessary. School and daycare closures would not be appropriate as the resulting disruption would outweigh any potential benefits.

4. If daycare attendees or staff have recently returned from Mexico and have no symptoms, do they need to stay home from daycare?

If they are well, no further action is needed. Children and staff can go to daycare however they should be monitoring for symptoms of influenza illness, practicing self care at home and consulting their physician as necessary. They should stay home if they develop respiratory symptoms. If they have more questions or develop symptoms they should call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-5465.

5. What do we do if we have sick kids attending daycare?

Sick kids should be managed as usual, practice good hand washing and taught to cover their cough / sneeze into their sleeve. Children or staff with symptoms should stay home for at least 7 days, and if symptoms persist longer than 7 days, for 24 hours after symptoms resolve.

6. Do staff need to wear masks in a room with sick children or staff?

No. Ill children and staff should remain at home and seek medical attention as necessary. Masks are not indicated at this time. Routine precautions to stop the spread of influenza are strongly recommended. This includes increased hand washing, covering your cough / sneeze with your sleeve and avoiding close contact with others if you have symptoms.

7. Where do we direct parents who are phoning the daycare for more information?

Parents can call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-5465 for more information. They can also get more information regarding self-care at <http://www.health.Alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-how-to-care.html>

8. Should field trips be cancelled at this time?

From a public health perspective, there is no reason for scheduled field trips to be cancelled at this time.

9. What do staff at the daycare need to do to prevent spread of Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) in the daycare?

Daycare centres should encourage and promote basic infection control practices. Hand washing is our best defense against disease. Daycare staff should follow strict hand washing standards. Hand washing by daycare providers, children and others is the most effective way to control the spread of any germs including this influenza virus.

10. When should daycare staff wash their hands?

- Upon arrival at the daycare centre
- Immediately before preparing, serving or eating food or drinks (including bottles).
- If using gloves, hands must be washed before putting gloves on and after removing the gloves.
- After using the toilet or changing a diaper
- After wiping your nose or a child's nose, coughing into your hand, or contact with blood or body fluids.
- Before going home and when you get home.

11. When should children wash their hands?

- Upon arrival at the daycare centre
- Immediately before eating food or drinks (including bottles).
- After using the toilet or having their diaper changed.
- After coughing or sneezing or touching their nose or mouth.
- After touching anything that could be a source of germs (e.g. shared toys).
- Before they go home.

Daycare staff need to ensure that children are washing their hands often and well or are helping the children wash properly. This can be achieved by role modelling appropriate hand washing and assisting children to clean their hands properly.

12. What should we use at the daycare centre to wash our hands?

Daycares need to have access to regular liquid soap in pump dispensers, (antimicrobial or antibacterial soap is not required) running water and paper towels to dry hands. Alcohol-based waterless hand sanitizers (60 – 90 per cent alcohol) can be used as an alternative as long as hands are dry and not visibly soiled.

Follow these instructions when washing your hands with plain soap and water:

- Wet with warm water.
- Apply soap and scrub for 15 – 20 seconds – all surfaces including front and back of hands, between fingers, around nails (especially cuticles), thumbs and wrists.
- Rinse well.
- Dry with a paper towel.
- Use towel to turn off taps.

Follow these instructions when using a waterless hand sanitizer:

- Apply enough product to your open palm that it takes 15 – 20 seconds of rubbing to dry.
- Rub into hands covering all surfaces including front and back of hands, between fingers, around nails (especially cuticles), thumbs and wrists.

Remember to frequently apply lotion to your hands to prevent the skin from chapping.

13. What should we do with used tissues/Kleenex?

Tissues should be placed in the garbage after use. The garbage should be in a location that is easily accessible. The garbage container should be lined with a plastic bag. The plastic bag should be removed and replaced when it is three-quarters full. The container should also be monitored to ensure the children are not reaching into it. Hands should always be cleaned after handling tissues and garbage.

14. Do we need to do any special cleaning?

Cleaning should follow the regular practices for your daycare centre. It is important to pay attention to cleaning the toys especially those that are mouthed. In addition high touch areas such as doorknobs, light switches etc. should be cleaned thoroughly and on a daily basis using your regular cleaning products and procedures.

15. Where can we find updates and information on Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza)?

For more information regarding Influenza A H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza, you can call Health Link Alberta for information at 1-866-408-5465.

For more information about self-care visit <http://www.health.Alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-how-to-care.html>