



## LOCAL 416

Affiliated with CUPE,  
Canadian Labour Congress  
and the Labour Council  
of Toronto & York Region

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## A/H1N1 (SWINE FLU) QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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### WHAT IS A/H1N1 FLU?

A/H1N1 flu is a highly contagious influenza that causes acute respiratory disease in pigs. It is spread by direct contact, and indirectly when an individual comes in contact with a contaminated surface. It is our understanding that outbreaks in pig populations happen year round. Although this type of influenza usually resides in pigs, these groups of viruses sometimes mutate with another virus that infects humans, such as what has happened with this strain. This current virus is receiving worldwide attention. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified it as influenza A/H1N1.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A/H1N1 FLU?

Clinical symptoms of A/H1N1 flu are similar to seasonal influenza, namely any one of or combination of the following symptoms.

Fever	Cough
Muscle aches	Sore Throat
Weakness/fatigue	Nausea
Vomiting	Diarrhea
Chills	Runny nose

### HOW SEVERE IS A/H1N1 FLU?

The majority of cases in Canada and in the US have been mild in nature. However, in Mexico where most of the cases have been reported there has been more severe cases and deaths have been reported.

## **HOW DO PEOPLE BECOME INFECTED WITH A/H1N1 FLU?**

People usually get this influenza from infected pigs. However, there is now evidence of human to human transmission.

## **ARE THERE ANY TREATMENTS AVAILABLE FOR A/H1N1?**

Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) seem to be working on people with severe A/H1N1 flu. It is important to note however, that according to the World Health Organization (WHO) many of the flu cases recover fully from the disease without requiring antiviral medication.

## **ARE ANTIBIOTICS AN EFFECTIVE TREATMENT FOR A/H1N1 FLU?**

**No.** Antibiotics kill bacteria. A/H1N1 is a virus.

## **IS THERE A VACCINE FOR A/H1N1 FLU?**

There is no vaccine for A/H1N1 flu, but there may be one available in 4 to 6 months.

## **DOES THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE PROVIDE PROTECTION AGAINST THE A/H1N1 FLU?**

The seasonal flu vaccine does not provide protection against the A/H1N1 flu.

## **IS IT SAFE TO EAT PORK PRODUCTS?**

**Yes.** There is no proof that A/H1N1 flu is transmittable to people eating properly prepared pork. A/H1N1 flu influenza virus is killed by cooking temperatures of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit/ 70 degrees Celsius.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'VE BEEN TO AN AREA WHERE THIS FLU HAS BEEN REPORTED AND I HAVE SYMPTOMS OF A RESPERATORY ILLNESS?**

If you recently travelled to an area affected by A/H1N1 flu and are feeling ill and you need to seek medical attention, be sure to call ahead to discuss your symptoms and travel history with the medical office or hospital you are planning to visit.

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AGAINST INFLUENZA?**

- Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly and frequently.
- Cover coughs and sneezes (cough or sneeze into your sleeve or arm if a tissue is not available).
- Avoid contact with people who have fever or cough.

- Practice good health habits (eg. adequate sleep, eat nutritious food)
- Keep your environment clean with household cleaning agents.
- Employees should follow established workplace protocol and raise any concerns with your Supervisor and your Joint Health and Safety Representative.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A/H1N1 INFLUENZA?**

According to the WHO, if you feel unwell, have a fever, cough and or sore throat:

- Stay at home and keep away from work, school or crowds as much as possible.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when coughing and sneezing and dispose of the used tissues properly.
- Wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly and frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Inform family and friends about your illness and seek help for household chores that require contact with other people such as shopping, paying bills, banking.

### **IS THIS THE NEXT INFLUENZA PANDEMIC?**

An influenza pandemic is defined as a new or novel influenza virus that spreads easily between humans. When a new influenza virus is introduced into the environment, humans do not have natural immunity to protect against it. Therefore, there is a risk that the new influenza virus could develop into a pandemic if the virus passes easily from human to human.

The A/H1N1 flu that has been identified appears to be a new virus, and there is evidence of human to human transmission.

### **WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

World Health Organization [www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en)

Centres for Disease Control <http://cdc.gov/swineflu>

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

Toronto Public Health [www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health)

Public Health Agency of Canada [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php)

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