



H1N1 Influenza Virus

Q and A for Families with Children Attending Recreational Camps

Current as of July 9, 2009.

Since this is a new strain of influenza, the information may change as scientists learn more about the virus.

What is H1N1 flu virus?

This virus, previously called "human swine flu" is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal flu. The symptoms may include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, coughing and sore throat. Some people with this virus have also reported vomiting and diarrhea.

Is this virus contagious? How does it spread between people?

The virus is believed to spread in the same manner as seasonal flu: person to person mainly by "droplet spread." This happens when droplets from a cough or sneeze are released into the air and then are breathed in by others who are less than 2 meters (6 feet) away. The virus can also be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. The virus can live outside the body on hard surfaces for up to 48 hours; however, the virus is easily killed by hand washing with warm water and soap, or with hand sanitizer. Household disinfectants will kill the virus on household items and surfaces.

Will the recreation camp be closed if there is a case of H1N1 flu virus?

Public health officials will consider each situation as it occurs. At this time camp closures are not anticipated for H1N1 flu, just as they would not occur for seasonal flu.

Should my child stay home?

Children who are healthy can attend camp.

What can be done to protect my child?

A person diagnosed with this virus will be isolated until they are without a fever and feeling better. This will prevent transmission of the virus to other campers and staff.

SMDHU recommends that campers and staff take these steps to prevent themselves and others from becoming ill:

- Wash your hands often for at least 15 seconds with soap and water—use hand sanitizer if you can't wash.
- Sneeze and cough into your upper sleeve.
- Do not come to camp if you are ill and monitor for signs and symptoms and see your health care provider if symptoms worsen.
- Staff should remain off work until they no longer have a fever and feel better.
- If your child becomes ill while at camp, they should see the Camp Nurse immediately for assessment.
- See your health care provider if you or your child are experiencing severe flu-like symptoms.

Hands should be washed:

- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- After using the bathroom.
- After shaking hands.
- Before eating and/or preparing food.
- Before touching your face.
- When you come into contact with someone who is ill.

Camps should follow usual practices which include:

- Children with symptoms of illness may be sent home and advised to stay home until well.
- If sending an ill camper home is not an option, they should be isolated from others until they do not have a fever and are feeling better.
- Campers and staff should be reminded daily of the importance of regular, thorough hand washing and good personal hygiene; and
- Campers and staff can be encouraged to avoid sharing of food, beverages and other personal items.

I think my child has been in contact with someone who was ill with this virus. What do I do?

If your child is feeling well, he or she can go to camp and continue regular activities.

Are there any medications available to prevent this flu?

Antiviral medications are available but are not recommended for people who are not ill. Antiviral medications may be recommended by a health care provider for treatment if your child develops flu-like symptoms.

Should campers and staff wear masks at camp?

Evidence shows that wearing masks is not an effective public health measure for preventing the spread of flu among the general public and it is not recommended at camp. Parents who feel strongly about wanting their children to wear masks should discuss this with their camp director.

What measures are taken to disinfect common indoor areas and bathrooms at the camp?

No enhanced cleaning or disinfecting is currently recommended.

Will the flu shot I got last year protect me?

There are many types of flu viruses. It is unlikely that the seasonal flu shot will provide protection against the H1N1 virus.

Are drinking fountains being turned off?

No. Regular practices and precautions should be followed. Avoid touching the spout of drinking fountains.

Will congregating at meal time be cancelled?

Meal times and locations will continue as usual.

Will any programming at camp be cancelled?

Planned activities will continue at this time.

Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

For general information, call *Your Health Connection* at (705) 721-7520 or toll free at 1-877-721-7520 Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

For more information on the H1N1 flu virus, call the *ServiceOntario INFOline* at 1-800-476-9708 (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.) or the *Public Health Agency of Canada* at 1-800-454-8302 (Monday to Friday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.).

Where can I get more information?

The following websites have sections dedicated to H1N1 flu virus information:

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit - www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care - www.health.gov.on.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada – www.phac-aspc.gc.ca