

## New H1N1 Influenza Update Public Update #2

April 30, 2009 - 3:00 p.m.

This is the Middlesex-London Health Unit's second update about the rapidly changing influenza situation. We will continue to keep you informed as information changes.

### Situation Update:

The new strain of H1N1 influenza is now being seen in many countries including Mexico, Canada, the United States and several European countries. Canada is now reporting 20 confirmed cases of this new strain of influenza, eight of which are in Ontario. The cases in Ontario have occurred in Durham, York, Peel and Toronto. All of these cases have occurred among travelers who recently returned from Mexico. Their symptoms have been mild and those infected did not require hospitalization.

Currently, there is only evidence of widespread infection in Mexico, and some evidence of spread in communities in California and Texas. Symptoms being reported outside of Mexico have generally been mild.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised its pandemic alert phase from level 4 to 5. Level 5 indicates that there is human-to-human spread of the virus in at least two countries. It is important to note that this change in levels does not indicate an increased risk in our community. The change in level was put in place to encourage those doing emergency planning to increase their efforts to prepare for a possible pandemic.

In Middlesex-London, we have received reports of approximately 35 people with a connection to Mexico who have influenza symptoms. We have ruled out infection with the new influenza strain for most of these people; however, we are awaiting laboratory results for a few of these individuals, and hope to have this information shortly. The risk of infection for the general public will only increase if we have evidence of ongoing spread in the community. Health Unit staff are actively monitoring hospital emergency departments and local doctors' offices for an increase in respiratory illness in the community. Currently, there is no evidence that this is occurring.

### Commonly asked questions:

#### Is there a risk from eating pork?

No. This new infection is not spread by eating pork. It is spread from person to person.

#### Should I get the influenza vaccine?

The current influenza vaccine will not provide protection against this new strain of influenza virus. The current influenza vaccine protects against regular influenza viruses and there are few cases of those viruses being reported in the community at this time.

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### **Should I wear a mask?**

No. There is no reason to wear a mask. It is uncertain whether masks for the general public will offer protection and there is currently no evidence that the new influenza virus is spreading in the community.

### **Why are there increased precautions when I go to health care facilities?**

Screening protocols for patients seeking health care have been put in place as per the recommendations of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. These protocols are designed to identify people with influenza-like symptoms, so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

### **Should I travel to Mexico?**

The Public Health Agency of Canada has issued a *Travel Health Warning* for Mexico, which recommends that travelers from Canada postpone elective and non-essential travel to Mexico until further notice.

### **What should I watch for if I have just returned from Mexico?**

Call your doctor if you develop influenza-like symptoms within 7 days of returning from Mexico, which include:

- Fever;
- Cough;
- Sore throat;
- Headache;
- Fatigue;
- Sore muscles;
- Joint pains;
- Diarrhea and vomiting have also been noted in some cases.

### **If I have been to Mexico and I am feeling well, can I go back to work?**

Yes. If you are feeling well and have recently traveled to Mexico, you can go about your regular activities. There is no need to consult with a health care provider before returning to work or school.

### **If I have influenza-like illness but have not traveled to Mexico, or have not had contact with anyone who has traveled to Mexico, what should I do?**

Call your health care provider only if your symptoms would normally prompt you to do so. There is no need to visit your health care provider if your symptoms are mild. You can return to work or school one day after you are symptom free. You do not need a note from a health care provider to return to work or school.

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**Advice for the general public:**

The Health Unit is recommending six infection control measures that have been recommended for many years. They are:

1. Washing your hands often using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Ensure hands are washed:
  - After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose;
  - After shaking hands;
  - Before eating;
  - Before putting in contact lenses;
  - Before touching your face.
2. Avoid touching your face as much as possible.
3. Coughing and sneezing into a tissue or your elbow. Throw out used tissues right away.
4. Do not share objects that have been in other people's mouths, such as toothbrushes, drinks and water bottles, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, lip products, and mouthpieces of musical instruments.
5. Stay home if you feel sick. You can return to work or school one day after you are symptom free. Staying home will help prevent the spread of infections to co-workers and the general public.
6. Frequently clean common surfaces such as keyboards, doorknobs, countertops etc.

**Additional information can be obtained on our web site at [healthunit.com](http://healthunit.com) or by calling 519-663-5317 ext. 2330. Further updates will be provided as the situation changes.**

You may also find additional information about the current Swine Flu situation through the following agencies and websites:

**Telehealth Ontario:**  
1-866-797-0000

**Public Health Agency of Canada:**  
1-800-454-8302

**Public Health Agency of Canada Swine Flu information:**  
[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine\\_200904-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine_200904-eng.php)

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

**The World Health Organization:**  
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>