



Hamilton

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Pandemic H1N1 2009 in Child Care Facilities

What is Pandemic H1N1 2009?

Pandemic H1N1 2009 virus (also known as novel H1N1 and swine flu) is a respiratory illness passed from person to person. The pandemic H1N1 flu virus was first identified in April 2009. Since that time it has infected people worldwide.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Symptoms begin from 1-7 (3-4 average) days after the virus enters the body. Symptoms of pandemic H1N1 are similar to seasonal flu. They include fever, cough and sore throat with headache, chills, nasal congestion, appetite loss, muscle aches, and fatigue. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may occur, more often in children. In severe cases complications such as pneumonia may develop.

Is it contagious?

Yes. A person can spread pandemic H1N1 starting **1 day before** he or she feels sick. Adults can continue to pass the virus to others for up to **7 days after onset** of symptoms. Children can potentially spread the virus for longer periods.

How is it spread?

Just like seasonal influenza, pandemic H1N1 influenza is spread through respiratory droplets. The virus is released when a person who is infected

with the virus coughs, sneezes, or speaks and sends out virus particles. The virus enters the nose, throat, or lungs of another person and begins to multiply, eventually causing symptoms.

The virus can survive on environmental surfaces and on hands, so pandemic H1N1 influenza may also be spread when a person touches a surface that has viruses on it – a door handle, for instance – and then touches his or her nose or mouth.

Pandemic H1N1 2009 and Child Care.

Hamilton Public Health Services recognize Daycares, and other child care settings as key players in preventing the spread of this virus. The advice from Hamilton Public Health Services to parents, children and staff at this time is as follows:

Wash your hands:

Children and staff should wash hands often with soap and warm water, especially after coughing and sneezing. If hand-washing facilities are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Keep the environment clean:

Cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, toys, and equipment will assist in preventing the spread of illness. Staff should also increase environmental cleaning with a special focus on surfaces such as door knobs, faucets, and surfaces that children frequently handle.

Do not share items:

Children and staff should not share food, beverages and other personal items such as utensils, lip products or toothbrushes. If a toothbrushing program is in place, staff must ensure children's toothbrushes are labelled clearly and stored in a manner protecting brushes from contamination.

Practice good hygiene:

Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue instead of into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Children observed coughing or sneezing should be reminded to cover their cough and assisted in washing their hands after sneezing or coughing.

Take care of yourself:

Eating and sleeping well are important for keeping your immune system in good shape, and will help fight off infections of many different types.

Stay home when you are ill:

If children or staff develop signs and symptoms of a flu-like illness (fever, cough, sore throat, headache, lack of appetite, fatigue, vomiting or diarrhea), they should stay home from the centre until their fever is gone and they are feeling well enough to participate in regular activities at the Daycare centre. If a child has respiratory symptoms, this should be made known to the Daycare. Staff should ask parents for information about a child's absence from the facility to determine if they are ill with respiratory symptoms.

Reporting Pandemic H1N1 to Public Health.

Hamilton Public Health Services will continue to work closely with child care facilities.

Daycare operators must notify Public Health Services if they observe absentee rates in over 5% of the daycare population with children presenting with respiratory symptoms.

In an outbreak situation, Public Health Services will work closely with Daycare staff to ensure proper infection control and prevention measures are in place and to ensure staff, parents, and children are working together to prevent further spread of the illness.

Where can I find more information?

City of Hamilton Public Health Services:
www.hamilton.ca/pandemic or 905-546-2063

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

Public Health Agency of Canada:
www.phac.gc.ca

World Health Organization:
www.who.int