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Questions & Answers Novel H1N1 Influenza and Healthcare Settings

- Q. How should a healthcare business continuity plan be revised to address issues relating to novel H1N1 flu?
- A. Novel H1N1 flu outbreaks will impact an organization's overall operations, employees, suppliers, and the family members of employees. It is important that a business continuity plan identify the essential functions of an organization's office or clinic. A plan should provide for sustaining core business activities for several weeks. There should also be alternate plans for critical supplies in case there is disruption in supply chains.
- Q. How can our organization ensure that its employees are ready for a novel H1N1 flu outbreak?
- A. The best way to ensure that employees are prepared for a novel H1N1 flu outbreak is to provide clear and frequent communication to staff to ensure they are aware of, and understand the organization's business continuity plan. Communications should explain any policies and procedures that will be used to protect staff and patients, and manage a surge of patients. Organizations can improve the resiliency of their staff by advising them to have a pandemic family plan or personal plan.
- Q. What is the anticipated employee absentee rate during a novel H1N1 flu outbreak?
- A. The CDC predicts that 20 to 40% of employees will not be able to come to work during a novel H1N1 flu outbreak. Cross training of staff is a key to resilience.
- Q. How can a business protect the workplace from novel H1N1 flu?
- A. One of the best ways to protect the workplace from novel H1N1 flu is to ask sick employees to stay at home. Sick leave policies should be developed to provide for this strategy. All personnel should self monitor daily for signs and symptoms of febrile respiratory illness. Staff who develop these symptoms should be instructed not to report to work, or if at work, should cease patient care activities and notify their supervisor. The CDC recommends employees with flu-like symptoms be excluded from work 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.
- Q. What concerns should we have for patients if novel H1N1 flu cases occur in our community?

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A. During the coming seasonal flu season your facility should make plans to screen patients for signs and symptoms of febrile respiratory illness at entry points to the facility. If feasible, use separate waiting and exam rooms for possible novel H1N1 flu patients; plan to offer surgical masks to symptomatic patients who are able to wear them (adult and pediatric sizes should be available), provide facial tissues, receptacles for their disposal, and provide hand hygiene products in waiting areas and examination rooms.

Q. What steps should a healthcare facility take to protect the health of its workforce during an outbreak of H1N1?

A. All healthcare personnel who come in close contact with patients who may have novel H1N1 flu should take precautions to include use of respiratory and eye protection for all patient care activities. Vaccines may be available for certain healthcare workers. For additional information on vaccines see http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/vaccination_qa_pub.htm

Q. Where can I get additional information on novel H1N1 flu and healthcare settings?

A. Staff in healthcare settings should monitor the [CDC H1N1 Flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) website (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>) or contact the City of St. Louis Department of Health at (314) 657-1546.

Also sign up to receive regular updates about novel H1N1 influenza, emerging infectious diseases, and other emergency preparedness and response information by going to www.emergency.cdc.gov/clinregistry .

For additional information on novel H1N1 flu and healthcare settings see [Influenza Vaccination of Health-Care Personnel](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5502a1.htm?s_cid=rr5502a1_e).

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5502a1.htm?s_cid=rr5502a1_e

[Healthcare Workplaces Classified as Very High or High Exposure Risk for Pandemic Influenza](http://www.osha.gov/Publications/exposure-risk-classification-factsheet.html)).

<http://www.osha.gov/Publications/exposure-risk-classification-factsheet.html>

[Interim Guidance for Infection Control for Care of Patients with Confirmed or Suspected Novel Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Infection in a Healthcare Setting](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm).

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm

[Proposed Guidance on Workplace Stockpiling of Respirators and Facemasks for Pandemic Influenza](http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/stockpiling-facemasks-respirators.html)).

<http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/stockpiling-facemasks-respirators.html>

[Medical Offices and Clinics Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist](http://pandemicflu.gov/index.html).

<http://pandemicflu.gov/index.html>

Healthcare worker with flu-like illness exclusion from work period

http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm