

Protect yourself. Protect others.

# H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)

## Information for home and community care providers 23 June 2009

### 'Protect' phase

Victoria is in the 'Protect' phase of its Influenza Pandemic Plan. Essentially, the changes mean HACC clients will continue to be treated on a case by case basis according to the flu-like symptoms they may display. It remains important to be vigilant with hygiene measures.

The 'Protect' phase includes a continued focus on early treatment of people from high-risk groups who present with flu-like illness. Some HACC clients may be included in the high-risk group and includes people with respiratory disease (asthma, Chronic Obstructive Airways Disease (COAD), heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, morbid obesity and weakened immune systems.

#### Current case definition for H1N1 Influenza 09

For adults it is the acute onset of illness with a measured temperature of  $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$  or significant history of fever (rigors, sweating, chills) plus two or more symptoms of cough, sore throat, body aches, fatigue/tiredness or shortness of breath. Check [www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au) regularly for updates.

Some people have reported diarrhoea and vomiting associated with Human Swine Flu.

The virus has so far been mild and can be compared to normal seasonal flu. Like seasonal flu, Human Swine Flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

### What you can do

#### Increase health and hygiene measures

Hand hygiene is the best defence against flu virus transmission. Encourage staff to:

- Wash their hands (with soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub) before and after contact with clients, particularly after coughing or sneezing or handling bodily fluids.
- Observe standard precautions when assisting with personal care tasks – these can be found in the Blue Book Appendix 3: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/bluebook>
- Covering nose and mouth if sneezing and coughing.
- Use disposable tissues instead of hankerchiefs and throw tissues away in a plastic-lined rubbish bin.
- Consider providing portable alcohol hand rub to your staff if there is inadequate or variable access to soap and water.

- Promote good hygiene to clients.

The virus may persist on hard surfaces for 1-2 days, particularly in cold or low humidity conditions and may remain viable on hands for 5 minutes.

### Immunize against seasonal influenza

If you have not done so already, encourage all direct care staff and clients to have the current influenza vaccination against seasonal flu. While this is unlikely to protect against Human Swine Flu, being vaccinated helps minimise the risk of staff and clients catching seasonal flu variants.

Flu vaccinations are free of charge for individuals aged 65 or over (50 years for those of aboriginal/Torres strait islander background), as part of the National Immunisation Program.

You may consider providing the influenza vaccination for direct care staff as part of your internal immunisation and business continuity plan.

**DO NOT** allow staff with flu-like symptoms to attend work until they are well.

### Check your PPE supplies

Ensure you have sufficient supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) when coming into contact with clients known to have influenza. These supplies may include gloves, gowns and masks (standard surgical).

### Take additional precautions

If a client has flu-like symptoms, additional precautions may be required on top of your standard precautions, such as:

- Be extra vigilant with hand hygiene. Wash hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol based rub and avoid touching your nose and face area.
- For close contact with the client (within 1 metre) you or the client should wear a (surgical) mask. If more than one person is attending the client, it would be easier for the client to wear the mask if they are able. **If the client is actively coughing, both the client and carer should wear masks.**
- If performing a task that may release aerosols (nebulised medication, chest physiotherapy etc), a P2

(N95) respirator (mask) should be worn in preference to a surgical mask.

- If it is anticipated that your clothes will come into contact with infective or potentially infective substances, a disposable gown should be worn.
- Wear disposable gloves when coming into contact with respiratory secretions or potentially infective surfaces.
- Decontaminate your hands with alcohol based hand rub (or a thorough soap and water wash) before and after removing gloves.

## Check your business continuity plans

It is vital that your business continuity plans are in place so that your business can function during times of disruption. The plan needs to consider issues such as staffing levels, service continuity and communication strategies.

It may be important to set up a means by which clients can contact your agency if they are diagnosed with Human Swine Flu. This will enable you to allocate staff and PPE appropriately.

For more information refer to the Australian Government's *Pandemic Influenza Workbook: Building Resilience through business continuity and pandemic planning* which can be found at: [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/progserv/Documents/pandemic\\_influenza/workbook.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/communities/progserv/Documents/pandemic_influenza/workbook.pdf)

## Further information resources

For other general information about H1N1 influenza 09 visit the Department of Health and Ageing's emergency website at: [www.healthemergency.gov.au](http://www.healthemergency.gov.au).

The Victorian Government website (<http://humanswineflu.health.vic.gov.au>) has information regarding the current human swine flu outbreak, including information for healthcare workers, businesses and the general public. There are numerous resources available to view and download on the website, including:

- Fact sheet about human swine flu for the general public, in a variety of languages
- Fact sheet for healthcare workers
- A list of frequently asked questions
- Posters – 'cover your cough and sneeze' and 'wash your hands regularly' which may be useful
- What is quarantine / isolation
- Latest media releases

## Be prepared

Make sure staff are prepared for the potential of either a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza), and that there are appropriate plans and procedures in place to deal with this.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit [www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)

Call the Swine Influenza Hotline Tel 180 2007

Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice  
(24 hours, 7 days)