

## PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009

### Q & A FOR CHILD CARE PROGRAM OPERATORS

**1. What is pandemic (H1N1) 2009?**

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 is a new strain of the influenza A virus which the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared as a pandemic virus, spreading person to person in many countries around the world. It contains a combination of genes from pigs (swine), birds (avian) and human influenza viruses.

**2. Is this the same as seasonal influenza?**

No. Strains of seasonal influenza circulate every year. This strain is not the same as previous or current seasonal strains of human influenza virus.

**3. How is this virus spread?**

The pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus is a respiratory virus. It spreads the same way as seasonal viruses, from one person to another through droplets that are released through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets can then be breathed in by others. These viruses can also remain on hard surfaces like counters, taps and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands. A person then becomes infected by touching their eyes, mouth and/or nose.

**4. How will I know if children in my program are ill with pandemic (H1N1) 2009?**

The pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus as well as the seasonal influenza virus cause an influenza-like illness (ILI), [see description below.](#)

**5. What is influenza-like illness (ILI)?**

ILI is defined as the sudden of fever and cough, and with one or more of the following:

- sore throat;
- joint pain;
- muscle pain;

- extreme fatigue;
- in children under 5, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also be present; and
- in patients under 5 or over 65, fever may not be prominent.

**6. How long is a person contagious if they develop pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza?**

Usually persons are contagious from one day before, up to seven days after symptoms begin. Children, especially younger children, immunocompromised individuals and those with severe illness may be contagious for a longer period, up to 10 days.

**7. Will children in my program become really ill from pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza?**

Most people have had fairly mild illness and start to feel better after three to four days by resting, drinking plenty of fluids, eating nutritious foods and using over the counter medications as necessary to treat influenza-like symptoms. A few people have progressed to a more severe respiratory illness. Most people recover from influenza in about a week.

**8. What should I do if children in my program have symptoms of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza?**

It's a good time to ensure that your child care program has administrative policies and procedures in place that include the care and supervision of ill children, and that all child care program staff and parents of children attending the child care program are aware of these procedures. When children in a child care program are ill with influenza-like illness (ILI), Alberta Health Services recommends the following:

- Children ill with ILI should remain home from child care programs. See #10 for information about when ill children can return to the child care program.
- If a child becomes ill with ILI while in care at your program:
  - Immediately notify the parent; and
  - under the direct supervision by a primary staff member, keep the child as far away from the other children as is practical, until the parent arrives to take the child home.
- Parents of children that stay home from the child care program should be asked to provide information about the reason for their child's absence such as an illness, injury or a medical/dental appointment. If the reason for absence is illness, parents should be asked what symptoms the child is having. Log the child's illness information on a child illness log sheet ([a sample log sheet is attached](#)).

If more than one child is away because of the same type of illness, this may be an “outbreak” and must be reported—see Question 11 below.

**9. What should I do if staff in my program have symptoms of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza?**

Child care program staff with ILI should remain home from work. If staff become ill while at work, they should be sent home as soon as possible. See #10 for information about when ill staff can return to work. See #12 for information about the impact of ill staff on staff to child ratios.

**10. If children or staff in my child care program have been at home ill with ILI, when can they return?**

Individuals ill with ILI should stay at home until their symptoms resolve and they are feeling well enough to fully participate in all normal child care program activities. A dry cough may continue to persist.

**Note:** In child care programs where a large proportion of children have underlying medical conditions that put them at high risk for severe illness or complications from pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus, symptomatic children should stay at home for 7 days after onset of symptoms or until symptoms have resolved and they are feeling well enough to fully participate in all normal child care program activities, whichever is longer. Cough may persist beyond one week.

**11. What do I do if several children in my program become ill with ILI?**

If two or more children in your program have ILI that started within 48 hours of each other, it must be immediately reported to your local Alberta Health Services public health department. This is considered a potential “outbreak” in your child care program. Outbreaks in child care programs must be reported to the health department. When a potential outbreak is reported, Alberta Health Services will assist you and your child care staff in preventing further illness in your facility.

Note: Potential outbreaks in child care programs located in a First Nations community should be reported to the local health centre.

**12. Will I need to close my child care program because of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza?**

Though transmission of pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus does occur amongst children at child care facility, it is also occurring in other community settings. As a result, the Public Health Agency of Canada continues to recommend against the widespread closure of child care facilities and this recommendation will be followed in Alberta.

However, it is possible that several child care program staff may be at home at the same time due to illness. If programs cannot meet the legislated staff to child

ratio, then the centre may need to consider a temporary closure until the required staff are available to work. In cases where a program needs to close, the operator must:

- ensure parents are notified immediately; and
- contact a Licensing Officer at their local child and family services authority to report the incident. Under the Child Care Licensing Regulation, license holders are required to report critical incidents that may result in the closure of their program. Licensing staff can assist you in working through the situation, providing alternatives for child care and ensuring appropriate steps are taken to keep children safe.

**13. What else can I do to protect the children and staff in my child care program from becoming infected with pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus?**

a. Hand cleaning.

**When should hands be cleaned?**

Children and staff should clean hands frequently using plain soap and water, especially:

- before meals;
- before feeding children;
- before and after preparing food;
- after using the toilet;
- after changing diapers or helping a child use the toilet;
- after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing;
- after playing with shared toys;
- before and after visiting with people who are sick; and
- after handling soiled material and when hands are visibly dirty

**How should hands be cleaned?**

For more information, see posters, “How to Clean your Hands” and the write up, ‘Clean your Hands Properly”, attached.

It is the mechanical action that removes dirt and germs.

When soap and water are not available, supervised use of alcohol based hand rub with a concentration of at least 60 per cent is recommended if hands are not visibly dirty. More information on the use of alcohol based hand rub is attached.

b. Cough etiquette

Practice proper cough etiquette, see poster, “Cover your Cough”, attached.

- The influenza and other viruses spread quickly from person to person through droplets in the air.
- These droplets come from our noses and mouths when we cough or sneeze, so raise your arm up to your face to cough, sneeze into your sleeve or cover your mouth with a tissue.
- If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible and clean your hands immediately.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth after shaking hands or touching hard surfaces like counters and door handles or other surfaces that may harbor influenza and other viruses.
- Avoid close contact with people who are experiencing influenza-like symptoms.
- Masks are not recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada because individuals lack the necessary training in their safe use.

c. Carry out frequent environmental cleaning

- **Clean high touch surfaces** (e.g., play equipment, toys, doorknobs, hand rails, faucet handles, etc.) **at least twice daily** to prevent transmission of the virus from person to person through contaminated hands. See “Toys and Equipment Cleaning – Manual Method”, attached.
- Provide adequate numbers of garbage receptacles in rooms and hallways and empty garbage at least daily.

**14. Should child care program field trips be cancelled at this time?**

There are currently no restrictions for child care program field trips (except for visits to health care facilities) however, it is recommended that:  
ill children remain at home;

- there is no sharing of drinks or food;
- appropriate alcohol based hand rub or hand cleaning facilities are available;  
and
- there is a process whereby parents can pick up their child if their child becomes ill with ILI symptoms during a field trip.

**15. Is there pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza information for parents of children in child care programs?**

Yes. Alberta Health Services and the Government of Alberta have developed “Q & A for Parents of Children Attending Child Care Programs”. It includes the same general information that is in this document.

**16. Can children and staff in child care programs be immunized for influenza?**

Immunization is the best defense against becoming ill with influenza and it helps to prevent the spread of the virus to others. The pandemic (H1N1) 2009 vaccine and the seasonal influenza vaccine are available to all Albertans over the age of six months at various locations across the province. Consult the Alberta Health Services website for more information.

**17. Where can I learn more?**

Health Link Alberta Toll free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465), Edmonton: 780-408-5465, Calgary: 403-943-5465

Alberta Health Services [www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca)

Alberta Health and Wellness [www.health.alberta.ca](http://www.health.alberta.ca)

Alberta Children and Youth Services [www.child.alberta.ca](http://www.child.alberta.ca)

Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

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## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

- 1. Sample Child Illness Log Sheet**
- 2. How to clean your hands**
- 3. Clean your hands properly**
- 4. Cover your cough**
- 5. Toys and Equipment Cleaning**

## Child Care Facility Illness Incident Log Sheet

<b>Ill <u>child's</u> name</b>	<b>Date illness first observed by or reported to staff</b>	<b>Date of first symptom (if illness first started at home)</b>	<b>Illness symptoms*</b>	<b>Action taken</b>	<b>Name of person documenting incident</b>	<b>Date incident documented</b>
<b>Ill <u>staff member</u> name</b>	<b>Date illness first observed by or reported to manager/director</b>	<b>Date of first symptom (if illness first started at home)</b>	<b>Illness symptoms*</b>	<b>Action taken</b>	<b>Name of person documenting incident</b>	<b>Date incident documented</b>

**Include all symptoms reported. For fever, include temperature if known.**

# Don't take germs with you. Wash your hands now!



## **Clean Your Hands Properly**

Cleaning your hands properly is an effective way to reduce your chances of getting ill with influenza or spreading the virus. Cleaning hands with plain soap and water is one of the most effective ways to stop the spread of infection, however, if soap and water are not available use a towelette that contains detergent, then use an alcohol based hand rub with a concentration of at least 60 per cent alcohol.

### **How to clean your hands with running water and soap**

- Turn on water and adjust temperature. Avoid extremes in temperature as this increases skin irritation.
- Wet hands under running water.
- Add plain soap to hands. Keep in mind that:
  - Antibacterial soap is not necessary and can promote resistance to antibiotics;
  - Liquid soap containers should not be “topped up” with soap—this can cause bacteria growth in the soap container. When a liquid soap container is empty, clean it before refilling, or, throw it away and use a new container;
  - If bar soap is used, it should be placed in a holder that provides adequate drainage; and
  - There should be hand moisturizer lotion available so that hands do not become dry and cracked.
- Lather soap and rub over all surfaces for minimum of 15 seconds. Pay attention to finger tips, between fingers, back of hands and base of thumbs as these are commonly missed areas.
- Thoroughly rinse hands to remove soap residue. Soap residue can cause the skin to become dry and irritated.
- Pat hands with paper towel or hold under an electric dryer until dry.
- Turn off taps with paper towel.

### **How to clean your hands with alcohol based hand rub (ABHR)**

- Apply ABHR to dry hand (hand size will influence the amount of product required.)
- Spread product over all surfaces concentrating on finger tips, between fingers, backs of hands and base of thumb.
- Rub hands until product is dry.
- This should take 15-20 seconds.

**NOTE:** Young children need help using alcohol hand rubs. Make sure that they are supervised while using ABHRs, to ensure that their hands are dry before touching anything or putting their hand in their mouth.

**Clean hands before:**

- handling or eating food or feeding others;
- brushing or flossing teeth;
- putting in or taking out contact lenses; and
- treating wounds or cuts.

**Clean hands after:**

- having any contact with a person who is sick or their immediate environment;
- going to the toilet, helping someone else use the toilet, or changing a diaper;
- blowing your nose or wiping someone else's nose;
- coughing or sneezing;
- treating wounds or cuts;
- handling garbage;
- returning home from school, work or shopping; and
- Children should clean their hands after playing with toys shared with other children.

**Encourage children to clean their hands often.**

- Teach by example.
- Help young children clean their hands.
- Make sure the sink, soap and towels are within reach.
- Place hand cleaning reminders at eye level for children.

Adapted from "influenza Self-Care – Clean your hands", <http://www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/influenza-wash-hands.html> , accessed on September 8, 2009

## Cover your Cough



Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

OR



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue.



Put your used tissue in the waste basket.

## Clean your Hands

After coughing or sneezing:



Wash with soap and water.

OR



Clean with waterless hand cleaner.

## Toys and Equipment Cleaning: Manual Method: Cleaning In Place

When toys and equipment cannot be immersed in water (in sinks), cleaning and sanitizing shall conform to the method noted below. Large toys and equipment must be:

1. **Washed** with a detergent solution that is maintained at a temperature of not less than 45°C.
2. **Rinsed** with clean water that is maintained at a temperature of not less than 45°C.
3. **Sanitized** by wiping with a cloth that has been immersed in an approved sanitizing solution (see “Approved Sanitizing Solutions” below). A sanitizing solution in a spray bottle may be used with a clean and sanitized cloth to replace this step.
4. **Air-dried**.

### Approved Sanitizing Solutions for “In Place Manual Cleaning”

- A solution of not less than 100 ppm available chlorine. [2 ml (~ ½ teaspoon) bleach for 1 litre of water]
- A quaternary ammonium compound having the strength of at least 200 ppm.
- A solution containing at least 12.5 ppm available iodine at a temperature of not more than 45°C.

### Drying Toys and Equipment

Toys and equipment must be allowed to air dry after being cleaned and sanitized. Towel drying is prohibited, as it will contaminate clean articles.

### Approved Sanitizing Concentration for Diaper Change Tables, Washrooms and Spills of Blood, Feces and Other Body Fluids

1:50 Bleach:Water (1000ppm Chlorine)  
(based on standard household bleach)

Adapted from the Child Care Facilities Guidelines, Alberta Health Services – Calgary, September 2009.