



# Health Info



City of Chicago  
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**Immunization Program**

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## **Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Guidance**

**Date:** September 25, 2009

**To:** Chicago Businesses and other Non-Health Care Workplaces

**Subject:** New Guidance to Limit Transmission of Influenza, Including Pandemic H1N1, in Businesses and other Non-Health Care Workplaces

In March 2009 a new influenza virus – influenza A H1N1 ('swine flu') – emerged. Since then, pandemic H1N1 influenza has impacted most areas of the world, resulting in large numbers of people becoming ill, and many deaths. In the United States alone, some 1,000,000 persons are estimated to have been infected, over 9,000 persons are known to have been hospitalized, and some 600 persons have died. Of note – pandemic H1N1 influenza had a disproportionate impact on children, as children had higher rates of illness and hospitalization than adults.

Over the course of the summer, the numbers of new infections due to pandemic H1N1 influenza has dropped in the United States. However, influenza activity is increasing again. Fortunately, vaccine is now available to protect people against seasonal influenza. Everyone 6 months of age or older should be vaccinated, as vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from seasonal influenza. It is especially important that persons in the following groups get vaccinated: all children 6 months to 18 years of age; all adults age 50 and older; all adults with chronic health conditions; and all household contacts and caregivers of children 6 months of age or younger. The latter recommendation is especially important – because children 6 months of age or younger cannot be vaccinated because of their age. Please encourage your employees to contact their physician or other healthcare provider to receive seasonal influenza vaccines. If they do not have a physician or their physician does not have vaccine, they can call 311 to locate a nearby Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) clinic.

Additionally, pandemic H1N1 vaccine will be available in mid October. Initially, when the vaccine becomes available, certain high-risk groups will be eligible to receive it: all children 6 months to 18 years of age; pregnant women; adults 19-24 years of age; adults 25-64 years of age with chronic health conditions; hospital and emergency services personnel, and all household contacts and caregivers of children 6 months of age or younger. Again, the latter recommendation is especially important – since children 6 months of age or younger cannot be vaccinated because of their age. As additional vaccine becomes available, all others will be able to receive it. Please encourage your employees to contact their physicians to receive pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccines. If they do not have a physician or their physician does not have vaccine, they can call 311 to locate a nearby CDPH clinic.

Though these two vaccines will play an important role in preventing illness and severe disease, other measures need to be used to help minimize the impact of both seasonal and pandemic H1N1 influenza. Recently, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new guidance intended to assist businesses and other non-health care workplaces in minimizing the impact of both seasonal and pandemic H1N1 influenza. This guidance is available at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov). In addition to this guidance, a communications toolkit and a guide to assist small businesses in preparing for influenza are also available at this website.

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CDPH is providing this notification to make sure you are aware of the new guidance, the communication toolkit, and the small business preparedness guide. **We strongly encourage you to review these materials, develop or update any existing policies and procedures, and implement the necessary activities to help decrease the spread of influenza in your business or workplace.** The following are a few important comments about this new guidance:

1. The guidance is divided into two groups: 1) recommendations to use now, assuming a similar severity to the spring/summer pandemic H1N1 influenza outbreak; and 2) recommendations to consider adding if the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus causes more severe disease.
2. The guidance recommends that individuals with influenza-like illness (ILI) should remain at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have fever (100°F [37.8°C]) or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications:
  - a. ILI is defined as a fever (100°F [37.8°C]) with a cough and/or sore throat.
  - b. Individuals with ILI should be instructed to discontinue the use of fever-reducing medications if they are no longer having a fever or signs of fever.
  - c. Individuals can still shed influenza virus after this period of time is over, but to a lesser extent. As a result, individuals should continue to practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene and avoid close contact with people they know to be at increased risk from influenza-related complications.
3. The guidance recommends that businesses take a pro-active approach by developing a Pandemic Influenza Plan. A number of resources are available to help assist you in such efforts, including the document entitled: "Planning for 2009 H1N1 Influenza: A Preparedness Guide for Small Businesses".

#### **What we need you to do:**

1. Please review the materials available at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), develop or update any existing policies and procedures, and implement the necessary activities to help decrease the spread of influenza in your institution.
2. Please identify a person who can serve as your point-of-contact and provide this person's name and contact information, including their email, to: [PHEOC@cdph.org](mailto:PHEOC@cdph.org). This will allow CDPH to provide your business with important information and updates throughout the influenza season.

#### **What CDPH can do for you:**

1. CDPH is available to assist you should you have any questions about the new CDC guidance or have specific situations you need assistance in handling. Please email these questions or requests for assistance to [PHEOC@cdph.org](mailto:PHEOC@cdph.org), or you may also call 311, where your question or request will be forwarded to CDPH personnel staffing our consultation line.
2. CDPH is keeping our website updated with a selection of accurate documents to help you keep up-to-date on the influenza situation. Please visit our website at [www.cityofchicago.org/swineflu](http://www.cityofchicago.org/swineflu).
3. CDPH will continue to monitor influenza activity throughout the fall and winter, and will provide you with updates as needed. We will also be providing you with information about the pandemic H1N1 vaccine, as new information becomes available.