



# The Regional Municipality of Durham Health Department

## COMMUNITY UPDATE

Information for the community of the Regional Municipality of Durham

**Update # 5– September 30, 2009**

**Community updates will be provided as new information arises**

The Durham Region Health Department has developed the *H1N1 Handbook*, a web-based H1N1 resource containing up to date information for various community partners and the public. Please access at [www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca)

### **About H1N1 (Swine) Flu and Symptoms**

- H1N1 (Swine) Flu is a variant of normal seasonal influenza and contains bits of viruses from birds, pigs and humans.
- Symptoms of H1N1 (Swine) Flu are similar to seasonal influenza (flu), and include **almost always** cough & fever, **frequently** fatigue, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, runny nose, decreased appetite and **sometimes** nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Fever may not be present in young children or the elderly.
- Influenza and other (severe) respiratory infections are transmitted from person to person via the respiratory route. Coughs and sneezes release the germs into the air where they can be breathed in by others. Sometimes people may become infected by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.
- H1N1 (Swine) Flu has not been shown to be transmissible to people through eating properly handled and prepared pork.

### **Global Situation**

The WHO has maintained the pandemic alert level at **Phase 6**. This decision is based on evidence of community spread of the virus across countries throughout the world, (approximately 175 countries as of August 14), and does not reflect any change in severity of the circulating virus.

The H1N1 virus is the predominant circulating strain of influenza at this time.

### **Current Situation**

In Ontario, we currently have **4,075** confirmed cases of H1N1 (Swine) flu, (September 19, 2009). It should be noted that this represents only a small fraction of the number of people who have been ill with the new H1N1 strain, as most people are not being tested when they develop symptoms. Ontario has confirmed **24** deaths associated with H1N1 (Swine) flu. Nearly all Ontario cases have been considered mild; there have been **373** hospitalized cases, most of which have recovered.

In Durham Region, we have received confirmation of **118** cases. The Durham Region Health Department continues to participate with health units across the GTA, provincial and federal authorities in monitoring, investigating and responding to this situation. Recently Durham Region Health Department, as guided by the Ontario Health Plan for Influenza Pandemic and the Durham Region Pandemic Plan ([www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca)), has been working closely with local hospitals, health care providers, community partners and agencies to plan for the possible establishment of a local Flu Assessment Centre. Planning is also underway for seasonal and H1N1 mass influenza immunization clinics.

Please ensure your own organization's pandemic plans are current.

### **Travel**

There are no travel restrictions or recommendations in place at this time.

### **What you can do**

#### **Sequencing of Seasonal and H1N1 Vaccination:**

**Seasonal** flu vaccination is initially recommended for everyone over the age of 65 and residents of long term care (LTC) homes living in Ontario. This will be available in early to mid October. Universal seasonal influenza vaccination (following H1N1 vaccination) will be offered to all ages in early December/January.

**H1N1** influenza vaccination will initially be offered to priority groups, which have been determined by the MOHLTC: for any priority populations in the sequence group, the Health Department is determining the best way to immunize people in our catchment area. We are currently working on the logistics of vaccine distribution and delivery, specific to our jurisdiction.

We expect that the H1N1 vaccine will be available in November.

#### **Who are priority groups for H1N1 vaccination?**

Groups to receive H1N1 vaccine in the first sequence (those who would benefit most from immunization and/or those who care for them) include:

- People under 65 with chronic conditions
- Pregnant women
- Healthy children 6 months up to 5 years of age
- Persons residing in remote and isolated settings or communities
- Health care workers involved in pandemic response or the delivery of essential health care services
- Household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines. These include:
  - Infants less than six months of age
  - Persons who are immunocompromised
- Populations otherwise identified at high risk (including those identified by Provinces and Territories)

Others who would benefit from H1N1 immunization include:

- Healthy children 5 to 18 years of age
- First responders
- Swine and poultry workers
- Healthy Adults between 19 and up to 64 years of age (this age group is at increased risk for severe H1N1 disease)
- Adults over 65 years of age and over

### **Where can everybody else get the H1N1 vaccine?**

Residents can receive the vaccine from their physician, nurse practitioner, or primary care provider soon after the immunization of the priority groups. In addition, the Health Department will offer community based clinics in 5 designated locations (Pickering, Whitby, Oshawa, Bowmanville, Uxbridge). Dates & specific locations will be provided shortly.

### **Public Health Measures**

Members of the public, including students, are advised to take the usual measures to reduce the risk of transmission of respiratory illness. These measures include:

- Wash hands frequently and properly using soap and water after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose, after shaking hands, before and after eating, before putting in contact lenses (eyes) or before touching your face. An alcohol based hand sanitizer can be used when hands are not visibly soiled. Provide alcohol-based hand rub in areas without sinks, i.e. classrooms
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing by using a tissue, or raise your arm to your face to cough or sneeze into your sleeve and wash your hands afterwards. If a tissue is used, throw out the tissue right away.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Keep frequently touched surfaces clean, i.e. keyboards, doorknobs, countertops.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as eating utensils, water bottles, drinks, hand towels, toothbrushes, cigarettes, lip products, mouthpieces of musical instruments, etc.
- Stay at home if you get sick with a respiratory-like illness. In addition, minimize contact with family members and avoid going out in public while feeling ill. You can return to work or school when you no longer have a fever and are feeling well.
- If you are a healthcare worker, you should not return to work until 7 days after the onset of symptoms and you no longer have a fever and are feeling well.
- Staying home will help prevent the spread of infections to co-workers, youth/children, and the general public.

**For additional recommendations on “*What to do if you have symptoms*” visit the Ministry of Ontario Health and Long-Term Care at:**

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/public/care.aspx>

**How is it treated?**

There are medications called antiviral drugs that can be started within 24 to 48 hours of symptoms for early treatment of infection with swine influenza viruses in humans. This is currently recommended only for influenza-like illness (ILI) in people at risk for complications and ILI in people with complications requiring hospitalization. Mild illness that appears to be going away on its own does not require medication. Antibiotics have no effect against a viral illness.

***Six Simple Steps to Staying Healthy*** is available for public distribution at <http://www.region.durham.on.ca/departments/health/sri/sixHealthySteps.pdf>

The ***H1N1 (Swine) Flu*** Facts About sheet can be found at [http://www.region.durham.on.ca/health.asp?nr=/departments/health/facts\\_about/swineFlu.htm&setFooter=/includes/health/healthFooter.inc](http://www.region.durham.on.ca/health.asp?nr=/departments/health/facts_about/swineFlu.htm&setFooter=/includes/health/healthFooter.inc)

## **Resources**

[www.durham.ca](http://www.durham.ca)

Durham Health Connection Line: 1-800-841-2729 or 905-666-6241

Public Health Agency of Canada  
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC)  
[www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)  
[www.fightflu.ca](http://www.fightflu.ca)

MOHLTC General Public Inquiries Swine Line: 1-800-476-9708 (Monday-Friday 8am-8pm)