



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Pike County General Health District

2009 H1N1 Influenza

### ***THE H1N1 VIRUS AND YOUR WORKFORCE***

Employers play a key role in protecting employees' health and safety, as well as in limiting the negative impact a flu outbreak can have on local businesses. This interim guidance is meant to inform and educate management and employees about appropriate precautions and work practices to minimize the risk of potential employee exposure, illness, and the spread of the H1N1 flu in the workplace. This guidance is to help employers with employees in who have minimal occupational contact with the general public and other coworker coworkers (for example, office employees).

**HOW IS THE H1N1 SPREAD?** *The H1N1 virus spreads the same way the seasonal flu spreads, mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Employees can also become infected by touching a contaminated surface (doorknob, soiled tissue) and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.*

#### ***What You Can Do to Anticipate and Respond to the Impact of the H1N1 on Employees***

Examine policies for leave and employee compensation and review with managers, supervisors, and employees so they are up-to-date on sick leave policies, leave donation, and employee assistance services that are covered under the different employee-sponsored health plans. Leave policies should be flexible and non-punitive.

- Plan for the possibility of unscheduled leave that encourages employees who are sick to stay at home to care for themselves and others who are ill with the flu or children dismissed from school.
- Establish policies for flexible worksite (e.g., telecommuting) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), if needed.
- Communicate policies for employee access to health care, mental health, and social services.

**DID YOU KNOW?** *Influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface.*



#### ***What Employers Can Do to Protect Employees***

##### **COVER COUGHS! WASH HANDS OFTEN!**

- Encourage sick workers to stay home and away from the workplace, and provide flexible leave policies.
- Encourage infection control practices in the workplace by displaying posters that remind workers about proper hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette. These posters can be found on [www.pike-health.org](http://www.pike-health.org) or call the Pike County Health District; we can make them for you.
- Provide written guidance (email, etc.) on H1N1 flu for everyone in the workplace. Employers should work monitor [www.pike-health.org](http://www.pike-health.org) and [www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org) to ensure they are providing the most appropriate and up-to-date information.
- Provide sufficient facilities for hand washing and alcohol-based hand sanitizers in common workplace areas such as lobbies, corridors, and restrooms.
- Provide tissues, disinfectants, and disposable towels for employees to clean their work surfaces, as well as appropriate disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- To reduce the chance of spread of the H1N1 virus, disinfect commonly-touched hard surfaces in the workplace, such as work stations, counter tops, door knobs, and bathroom surfaces by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.

**Pike County General Health District**

**Management of Employee H1N1 Exposure**  
**COVER COUGHS! WASH HANDS OFTEN!**

***Symptoms***

The symptoms of this influenza A (H1N1) flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Also, as with seasonal flu, severe illnesses and death have occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

***What to Do for Co-workers of an Employee Who is a Suspected or Confirmed Case of H1N1 flu***

- Inform the employees of their exposure to a co-worker with confirmed, probable, or suspected novel H1N1 flu during the ill person's infectious period.
- Have the employees monitor themselves for symptoms.
- Advise employees to check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a chronic health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.

***What to do When an Employee Comes to Work with Influenza-Like Illness Symptoms***

- Notify appropriate health center or first aid personnel.
- Place the employee in a room by him- or herself.
- If the employee needs to go into a common area, he or she should cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue or wear a facemask if available and tolerable.
- Notify the employee's supervisor or employer.
- Send the employee home as soon as possible.

**Call for emergency medical services if the ill person develops any of the emergency warning signs.**

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Ensure the ill employee stays home for at least 24 hours after the employee's fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities (their fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

*Information Provided Here is Based on Current CDC Recommendations as of August 6, 2009*

For More Information Contact:

**Pike County General Health District @ [www.pike-health.org](http://www.pike-health.org) or (740)947-7721**