



## **Pandemic Influenza Guide for McMaster University**

This guide is intended to help you, as a student, employee or visitor, understand the threat of a pandemic influenza outbreak in our community. It describes common sense measures you can take to prepare for a pandemic. It will also outline the various steps that McMaster University has taken to help minimize the impact of a pandemic to students, employees and visitors.

This Guide is intended to accompany the University's Business Continuity Planning Program (refer to RMM #1206) and Workbook.

To develop this guide the University has consulted with various experts, both internal and external including Hamilton Public Health, Infectious Disease Experts, the Centre for Disease Control, Public Health Agency of Canada and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.

### **1. What You Need to Know**

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A pandemic occurs when a new virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity, and for which there is no vaccine. The disease spreads easily from person to person, causes serious illness, and can sweep across the country and around the world in a very short time. Pandemic influenza is a type of influenza that occurs 3-4 times per century.

A pandemic is expected to last much longer than most flu outbreaks and may include "waves" of influenza activity that last 6-8 weeks and may be separated by months.

Swine influenza viruses do not normally infect humans. From time to time, human infections do occur, resulting in this new strain of H1N1 flu virus. H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal influenza. To date, symptoms of H1N1 flu include: fever or chills, coughing/sore throat, fatigue, nausea/vomiting and diarrhea.

Spread of the H1N1 flu virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may become infected by touching contaminated objects or surfaces with flu viruses on them and then touching their mouth or nose.

**Education, early identification and self screening are critical to minimizing exposures to the H1N1 flu virus. Practice good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette and stay home when ill.**

### **2. What You Need to Do**

Begin your preparation now at home, school and work. The following are some things to consider as you prepare:

- Stores may close or have limited supplies. Have extra supply of water, food, and non-prescription drugs to treat fever.
- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted, including health care facilities, banks, restaurants, government offices, telephone companies and post offices,
- Transportation services may be disrupted and you may not be able to rely on public transportation. Plan to take fewer trips and find alternate routes to get to work or school,

- Talk with your family about where family members and loved ones will go in an emergency and how they will receive care, in case you are unable to communicate with them,
- Understand and practice social distancing measures to minimize the spread of the virus. Explore ways to increase distances between one another, ideally up to 2 meters,
- Stay informed; know the facts, identify reliable sources of information, listen to local and national news, talk to your local health care providers and public health officials.

#### For Employees:

- Talk with your supervisor, health & safety office, family physician, union or employee association or Human Resources Services about the appropriate absence reporting protocols in case you become ill or in case you need to care for a family member who becomes ill.
- The absence reporting protocol will require employees to self-screen and self-report using a web based tool. This tool will report aggregate data only for the purposes of identifying clusters of cases.
- Pregnant women and individuals with pre-existing chronic disease should ensure that they practice proper hand hygiene and contact their health care provider as soon as possible if they become ill

#### For Students:

- Talk with your professors, roommate, residence manager, sports clubs, other extra-curricular organizations about the appropriate absence reporting protocols

### 3. What McMaster University Is Doing

McMaster has a Business Continuity Plan and is prepared to respond accordingly. Each department is responsible to develop their own Business Continuity Plan, which is specific to their needs and potential risks.

McMaster has taken the following measures:

1. Dedicated website to H1N1 updates, information and important contacts specific to our University.
2. Focused on education and prevention of H1N1 and seasonal flu, which is the best approach to minimizing the impacts on our community.
3. Held and will continue to conduct regular meetings for the Business Continuity Planning Committee, and the University's Crisis Management Group (CMG). The CMG decides on all appropriate measures to be taken in response to a University business disruption such as an infectious disease pandemic, ensures that all resources of the University are available as required and adheres to all responsibilities as defined within the University's Business Continuity Plan in addition to Faculty/department specific Business Continuity Plans.
4. Communicated with students living in residence and their parents. Information packages will be supplied in each residence room regarding prevention measures to stop the spread of the virus, how to take care of themselves if ill and how to access healthcare for assessment of their medical condition if needed.
5. Promoted hand hygiene, distributed updated hand washing posters and encouraged cough/sneeze etiquette.
6. Installed a hand sanitizer dispensing unit at each campus building.
7. Stocked McMaster stores (ABB and HSC) with supply of hand sanitizer and disposable disinfectant wipes for easy access to departments.

8. Increased frequency of cleaning in high traffic areas such as “push bars” on doors, all door handles, all light switches, taps and sinks, photocopier handle and buttons, buttons on the printers and faxes, handrails in the stairwells, fridge handles in cafeterias, counters including reception areas, cafeterias, social facilities, etc., telephone receivers, keyboards and computer mouse devices, fitness equipment in athletic facilities, all tables, desks and lecterns
9. Consulted with and received direction from Public Health regarding the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). It is recommended that only individuals providing direct health care wear PPE.
10. Adoption of a self-assessment Screening Tool for Influenza-Like-Illness available at the H1N1 website:  
[http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1\\_flu/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1_flu/)
11. Continue with annual Seasonal Flu Shot Program held in November. This program is free to employees and students, although this will not target H1N1 directly.  
Employee Flu Shot Clinics are scheduled on November 16-19, 2009.  
Student Flu Shot Clinics are scheduled on November 16-17, 2009.  
A vaccine is being prepared which will be available to all Canadians in the event of a pandemic. Public Health will organize clinics to vaccinate the general public. Updated information will be provided whether this vaccine will be available as a part of McMaster's annual flu shot clinics.

#### 4. Communications

The communication plan and availability of information to/with faculty, staff, students, parents/guardians/spouses/partners and the general public regarding preparation and prevention, and in the case of an outbreak, links to local, provincial and federal agencies is readily available to all University employees and students. McMaster has developed the following communication methods:

- Education materials/training sessions on business continuity fundamentals, employee and supervisory roles and responsibilities, occupational health and safety issues.
- A website devoted to on-campus H1N1 updates, including preparedness, response, and recovery. Students and employees are encouraged to visit this website regularly, as the information will change over time. The address of the website is:  
[http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1\\_flu/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1_flu/)
- Communication with students, parents, employees, and the general community will be the responsibility of the Public Relations Office, in consultation with McMaster University Crisis Management Group.
- Supervisors who are informed of an H1N1 case in their workgroup should report such issues immediately to Employee Health Services (EHS). Supervisors will be responsible for ensuring employees are aware of the absence reporting protocol, which includes notifying their supervisor, using the self-screening tool and the online reporting form. With guidance from Public Relations, EHS and EOHSS/FHSc Safety Office, the supervisor will be responsible for dissemination of information within the work unit. For example, in the event of a pandemic, all communications will follow the protocols of the McMaster University Crisis Response Plan.

## 5. School Closure

The University will take all measures necessary to ensure the safety of its students, employees and visitors and as such all classes and activities at McMaster are operating as normal, we will continue to monitor the H1N1 influenza condition daily.

The Public Health Agency of Canada does not recommend widespread proactive closures of Universities at this time during the pandemic. A reactive decision to close the campus would be made by the Provost in consultation with the Crisis Management Group and local Public Health Services.

## 6. STAFF & FACULTY

The responsibility of staff and faculty includes supporting the delivery of academic and research programs and essential services to students, as directed by the University.

Chairs, Directors, Administrative Officers and Managers are responsible for preparing their business continuity plans. Their role is to monitor and advise the respective Vice President, Dean or AVP of any changing conditions affecting the delivery of essential services to their students, faculty and staff. As a leader you should identify a process for communicating the Plan to your direct reports and evaluating your Plan.

All employees must be familiar with their departmental business continuity plan and understand their responsibilities should the Plan be initiated. In addition, you should practice good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette and refrain from attending work when displaying influenza symptoms.

McMaster is reviewing its absence management requirements for employees, and is exploring the development of an electronic web reporting tool so that employees, who are exhibiting flu symptoms, will be able to complete a self-screening tool and self-report their absence to their supervisor. In this event, you are still required to contact your supervisor and follow your department's absence reporting protocol. You should remain away from work until you have been symptom free for 24 hours. *This online reporting measure will only be in effect if a specific announcement is made.*

In the event of an H1N1 pandemic, this online tool will be used for the purposes of tracking attendance levels and reporting aggregate attendance levels with the relevant agencies including Public Health Services, the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board and other relevant organizations.

## 7. STUDENTS & PARENTS

We are all responsible for protecting ourselves and those around us. Please read below to learn more about issues specific to students at McMaster.

### 7.1 Students in Residence

Residence is more than just where you live, it is your home away from home. At McMaster we want to make sure that you are living in an environment that is safe and supportive.

Consideration should be given to the following recommendations when for those living in residence:

- In addition to the usual packing items, it is recommended that you bring the following supplies with you:
  - over-the-counter medication to reduce aches and fever (e.g. acetaminophen or ibuprofen)
  - any prescription medicines you take
  - a thermometer (non-mercury)
  - tissues
  - hand sanitizer (should contain at least 60% alcohol)
  - disinfecting wipes or cleaning products to clean your shared and personal space
  - a water bottle
- You should identify, in advance, one or more “buddies”. These are friends who can help you in case you get sick by taking notes in classes, checking in with you periodically to see if you need anything.
- If you are displaying symptoms you are encouraged to go home to recuperate, if you are able to use private transportation; transport using public transportation is strongly discouraged.
- Your residence manager will suggest that you call a family member and remain in regular contact with them. Residence Life will be working with Campus Health Centre on the management of suspected cases of H1N1 flu.
- If it is not possible to go home, and you will stay in residence please advise your residence manager.
- This may mean minimizing contact with others to avoid spreading the flu, staying in your room for up to a week and not attending classes or participating in social and extra-curricular activities.
- Talk with your residence manager about initiating the buddy system, so that you can have food, beverages, and medications delivered to you.
- If your symptoms are severe you may need to go to hospital, if necessary.
- Hand washing posters have been mounted in all washrooms, please familiarize yourself with the appropriate and recommended hand washing process.

## 7.2 On-Site Health Care

Students, living on or off campus, have access to on campus health practitioners through the Campus Health Centre. The centre is located in MUSC-B101 and is open Mondays – Fridays with evening hours on Mondays and Wednesdays. For more information on their services visit, <http://www.mcmaster.ca/health/>

## 7.3 Academic Considerations

All classes and research activities at the University will continue to operate as normal although the situation will be closely monitored.

There may be high absenteeism in both classrooms and department offices if a pandemic does occur. McMaster is developing plans to suspend the normal medical certificate requirements for student absences, and is exploring the development of an electronic web reporting tool so that students, who are exhibiting flu symptoms, will be able to self-report their absence to their instructor. In this event, students should remain away from class and the University until they have been symptom free for 24 hours. *These measures will only be in effect if a specific announcement is made.* In the event of an H1N1 pandemic, this online tool will be used for the purposes of tracking attendance levels and reporting aggregate attendance levels with the appropriate agencies including Public Health Services, Campus Health Centre, and other relevant organizations.

The University is exploring ways to accommodate students who may have missed work due to H1N1 illness, including the provision of options for completing course requirements.

In the event of an instructor becoming ill, the University will make best efforts to replace the instructor so that the class can continue in the regular timeframe. A procedure will be developed to provide students with information if there are changes in class schedules.

For updates about the H1N1 virus, visit [http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1\\_flu/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1_flu/) for the most current information.

## 7.4 Student placements

McMaster University provides students the opportunity to receive hands-on training through professional placements.

These placements may be required for some students to graduate and receive their degree. A pandemic may affect the students currently enrolled in a professional placement and the ability of students to secure these placements during a pandemic. As a general principle, as long as learners can be provided with a safe learning environment, there should be no restriction on their clinical placements.

Students should speak with their faculty program coordinator about the potential impacts to their placement. For students in clinical placements additional information has been developed, please refer to the *Guidelines for the Support of Learners During Clinical Placement in the Faculty of Health Sciences during a Pandemic or Localized Outbreak*.

## 7.5 Considerations Prior to Travel

Individuals who are traveling from other parts of the country or other countries in advance of their travel will be advised not to travel while ill.

## 8. What Next?

The University is taking steps to minimize the spread of the virus; you will continue to see more information around campus reminding you to practice flu prevention behaviours, and staying home or in your residence room when you are ill. For on-going updates visit the University H1N1 update website:

[http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1\\_flu/](http://www.mcmaster.ca/opr/h1n1_flu/)

### 8.1 Additional Information Resources

This section is a resource tool in order to aid in your efforts for preparedness. The following are overviews and links to these resources.

#### ***World Health Organization (WHO)***

The WHO is the United Nations specialized agency for health. The WHO is the global leader in pandemic preparedness.

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>

#### ***Health Canada***

Health Canada is the Federal department responsible for helping Canadians maintain and improve their health, while respecting individual choices and circumstances. Health Canada, in

partnership with provinces and territories, has a plan in place to ensure appropriate steps are taken to protect Canadians from a pandemic.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/ed-ud/prepar/flu-pandem/index-eng.php>

***Public Health Agency of Canada***

In the event of a pandemic or any other infectious disease, the Public Health Agency of Canada is the lead organization for coordinating the health response.

[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemic\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/pandemic_e.html)

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/index-eng.php>

***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)***

The CDC is committed to achieving true improvements in people's lives by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability.

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/>

***Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)***

A Pandemic planning website that offers helpful documents and tools.

<http://www.ccohs.ca/pandemic/>

***The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC)***

The ministry is responsible for administering the health care system and providing services to the Ontario public. Their website contains The 2008 Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic.

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/>

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/default.aspx>

***City of Hamilton***

Public Health Services has developed a Hamilton Community Pandemic Plan.

<http://www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton/CityandGovernment/HealthandSocialServices/PublicHealth/PandemicInfluenza/>