

## H1N1 Information for Parents

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\*Please note that the following information and guidelines may change as the pandemic unfolds and more information becomes available.

### Is H1N1 here in Nova Scotia

Yes, "There are confirmed cases of H1N1 (human swine influenza) in Nova Scotia."

### What is H1N1?

H1N1 is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of regular human seasonal influenza. The virus is spread by germs that are released into the air by coughs and sneezes and breathed in by others

### What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 and what should I look for?

- ***Fever and/or cough along with one or more of the following:***
  - sore throat
  - muscle aches
  - joint pain
  - head ache
  - unusual tiredness
- ***Other symptoms, including diarrhea and vomiting may be present (especially in children) however the symptoms listed above are the most common.***

### What if someone in my family has symptoms?

If you or your child has flu-like symptoms, avoid close contact with others until you have been system free for 48 hours or for 7 days after the symptoms start. This is the time when the illness can be spread to others. Stay home from school, work, public places and social settings. Minimize contact with family members as much as possible. Like any illness, should your symptoms worsen contact your local Doctors Office or Hospital. Please see the handout: **10 Tips for At-Home Care.**

### If we are not sick, should we stay away from large crowds or social activities to play it safe?

No. If no symptoms are present it is advised to keep doing what you normally do while practicing basic infection control as described below. Also it is good practice to carry your own bottle of hand sanitizer with you especially when in crowds.

\* If you are pregnant caution should be taken when entering situations where there are many people in close quarters and little control over personal contact-it is recommended that pregnant women carry a hand-sanitizer and wash their hands even more often along with the following precautions listed below. This will help to reduce the risk of picking up the virus.

### As a parent is there anything my family can do to lessen our chance of catching this virus?

- **Prevention:** The Public Health Agency of Canada advises all Canadians to:
  - wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, or use hand-sanitizer
  - cough or sneeze into your arm or sleeve, not your hand
  - keep common surfaces and items cleaned and disinfected
  - keep doing what you normally do, but stay home if sick.
  - seek medical care if flu-like symptoms worsen or you are concerned

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\*If you are pregnant it is especially important to follow these guide lines and to seek medical care if symptoms occur. For more information refer to “**Where can I find out more information?**” near the bottom of this page.

- **Preparedness:** As with any potential hazard or threat, a family emergency plan should be made and known to all family members.

### How can families do this?

**1. Make your List:** What supplies might you need to help cope with the event? What would your family need to get through a week or more of flu-like illness? Here are some supply suggestions:

- toilet paper, tissues and garbage bags (to dispose of used tissues)
- cleaning supplies- disinfect common surface areas- door knobs, phones, washrooms
- easy to prepare foods (soups and whatever your family likes to eat when sick)
- juices, water and popsicles to help stay hydrated.
- flu medications (whatever types your family normally uses to get over the flu)

**Remember** it is always best to check with your Doctor or Pharmacist when it comes to medications.

**Do not give aspirin to children as it has been linked to Reye’s syndrome. Avoid overuse of cough suppressants. Do not give decongestant or cough suppressants to children under the age of 6 years.**

### 2. Stock your Supplies

By the items from your list and set them aside with your 72 hr Preparedness Kit. \*Consider buying one or two items on your list every time you go grocery shopping until you have everything to help with cost.

### 3: Build your contact and resource lists:

Who might you need to call to help out if you are sick? Are there child care contacts you should call? Are there work numbers you should have on hand? Are there resources that could enable you to work from home if you were too sick to go to work or needed to stay home for family members? Do you have phone numbers for people you might need to check on such as elderly family members and neighbors’? (**See Guide**)

**4: Talk about your plan!** It is no good to have a plan if no one else knows about it! Emergency plans should be shared. Talk to everyone involved and make sure every family member knows where the supplies and list of phone numbers are kept.

### Where can I find out more information?

1-888-451-4222 NS Toll Free H1N1 Information Line

[www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/flu](http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/flu)

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

*The above information has been taken from the “July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 1<sup>st</sup> Edition of the H1N1 Tool Kit for Community-Based Health Care Providers” as well as the “Toolkit about H1N1 for Summer Camps July 10, 2009” both of which were produced by NS Health Promotion and Protection. Information has also been taken from the Public Health Agency of Canada’s website and the handout from Emergency Preparedness Week.*