

Learners:

What is my role in the clinical setting with respect to the present H1N1 Flu Virus Pandemic or local outbreaks?

1. Use appropriate infection control measures as outlined in the “General” section above to protect yourself and your patients, and to help in preventing the spread of flu. If you are not certain about how to implement the suggested infection control measures, ask your supervisor, clinical staff on your unit or local infection control personnel.
2. Maintain an appropriate index of suspicion when interacting with individuals who describe or display signs or symptoms of influenza like illness (ILI). If you are unsure of the appropriate infection control measures to follow with a patient, discuss this with your supervisor, clinical staff on the unit, or local infection control personnel.
3. Be prepared to respond to requests by the province and/or university to increase or decrease your clinical activity depending on public health policy decisions related to clinical education and human health resource issues.
4. Comply with the requirements of your program with respect to completion of the health screening record, and annual mask fit testing and training.
5. Be aware of the opportunities to obtain an influenza vaccination. Provide documentation to your program when you receive the vaccination. If you are exempt from immunization because of a medical condition (persons who had a serious adverse reaction to a previous dose or any component of the vaccine, or with known anaphylactic hypersensitivity to eggs which is manifested as hives, swelling of the mouth and throat, difficulty in breathing, hypotension, and shock), obtain documentation from your physician and provide it to your program.

What if I think I have H1N1 Flu Virus? What if I have signs or symptoms of Influenza-like Illness?

1. If you are in a clinical setting, use the same screening tool as that used for other health care workers in that setting. In the event that the facility does not provide you with a self-screening tool as part of your orientation, use the screening tool below (adapted from St. Joseph’s Hospital and Hamilton Health Sciences staff self-screening tool). Note that this tool may be updated as circumstances change – ensure you have access to the latest version available through your educational webportal. McMaster University also has a screening tool on its web site, under ‘flu information’.

Do you have the following symptoms?

A. New onset or worsening of existing cough;

AND

B. Fever greater than 38° C.

PLUS

C. Sudden onset of any of the following:

- Sore throat
- Headache
- Joint pain
- Muscle pain
- Severe fatigue

If you have answered **yes** to **A AND B, PLUS** one of **C** you have **FAILED** the Influenza Like Illness – Self Screening Tool.

If you fail the screening:

- Do not attend school or your clinical placement;
- Notify Employee Health of the facility if you are on a clinical rotation;
- Notify your preceptor if you are on a clinical rotation;
- Notify your program (this can be done through the McMaster web page – ‘Student H1N1 Symptom Reporting Tool’ found under the ‘flu information’ link. This reporting tool will inform your program that you are ill and will be away from school for up to 7 days

***Note:** If you are pregnant or if you have an underlying medical condition such as asthma, cardiac disease, diabetes, immunosuppression or renal disease you need to be assessed by your physician as you may need anti-viral treatment.

If you are off work due to influenza-like illness, your return to work is at the direction of Employee Health. Students in a clinical setting should remain off until 24 hours after all symptoms, apart from a mild cough, have resolved. If you are in class, you should stay home until fever has been absent for 24 hours and you are feeling well enough to resume normal activities.

2. Treat your symptoms as you normally would. Contact your healthcare provider in the way that you normally would if you were suffering from flu symptoms. If possible, make reasonable attempts to isolate yourself from others while you continue to have symptoms. Make appropriate use of healthcare resources by using your personal primary care provider, Student Health services, walk-in clinics, or Telehealth Ontario rather than hospital emergency rooms.
3. Make reasonable attempts to avoid infecting others by washing your hands, using proper etiquette when coughing or sneezing, etc.
4. You may be contacted by individuals with information about recommended or required diagnostic tests or therapeutic interventions. Information may come from your personal primary care provider, supervisor, educational program, hospital or clinic staff, local public health unit, etc. While you must consent to participate in matters related to your own healthcare, many recommendations will be based on public health interests or your own ability to continue working in the clinical environment (e.g. nasopharyngeal swabs, use of antiviral medications for prophylactic or symptomatic treatment, immunizations, etc.); therefore, you are strongly encouraged to participate.

What if I feel severely ill or compromised by symptoms of ILI?

1. Contact your personal primary care provider or get seen at an appropriate hospital emergency department. Taking appropriate precautions (e.g. wearing a mask) until you have been assessed. If you are at work when this occurs, advise your supervisor and then go to the emergency department (if available in your clinical setting) of Employee Health Services.
2. Call an ambulance (9-1-1) if you are too ill to be seen by your primary care provider or to get to an appropriate emergency department on your own.

What if I am exposed to H1N1 at my clinical placement?

If you are exposed to H1N1, antiviral prophylaxis (Tamiflu) may be given on the advice of Employee Health. They will distribute the Tamiflu and keep records.

Make reasonable attempts to isolate yourself. Practice social distancing, perform hand washing and coughing etiquette.