

August 28, 2009

## **A Message on H1N1 Flu to Brown Study Abroad Students, Parents, and Advisors**

The H1N1 flu virus has received worldwide attention. The Office of International Program's H1N1 planning is a part of the university's larger planning for a possible emergency (see [www.brown.edu/h1n1](http://www.brown.edu/h1n1)). The University's planning is being guided by numerous sources and authorities, including the Center for Disease Control and World Health Organization guidelines.

We are providing this information on H1N1 (swine) flu by way of general information for students and parents. The Office of International Programs (OIP) is in close contact with its site coordinators abroad, all of whom are monitoring local advisories relating to the H1N1 virus. Approved program providers for Brown students in other parts of the world have also been in contact with the OIP to assure us that they too are continuing to monitor the situation.

Generally, the incubation period of H1N1 influenza is a maximum of 5 days. If a person contracts the illness, symptoms would likely occur within that time frame. In addition, traditional illness prevention methods—such as frequently washing your hands or using

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer, along with covering coughs and sneezes with your arm or sleeve—remain important to reduce any potential spread of all such respiratory illnesses.

Brown does not foresee any delays or changes to our fall programs at this point. Throughout the 2009-10 academic year, Brown program site coordinators will advise students of the latest government precautions for their respective countries and will keep us posted as events evolve. The OIP also encourages every program participant to monitor his or her own personal health and to consult with your respective site coordinator about seeking medical evaluation should a fever develop.

For a number of years, the University has been preparing for the potential of a global pandemic flu outbreak. In 2006, a University-wide task force was created and developed a University pandemic prevention and response plan. The task force is in regular contact with the Rhode Island Department of Health, with faculty from the Alpert Medical School, and with leadership from Brown University Health Services. OIP's director serves as a member of the task force and is in regular contact with the task force leadership.

As the situation evolves, the OIP will update this message as appropriate.

### General Information

#### **What is H1N1 (swine flu)?**

Novel H1N1 ("swine flu") is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses

spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

### **Is novel H1N1 virus contagious?**

CDC has determined that novel H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

### **How does novel H1N1 virus spread?**

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 spreads mostly from droplets (like spit and mucous) from the mouth, nose, and throat. This happens when a person with the flu coughs or sneezes near (within 3 to 6 feet) an uninfected person. The virus can also live for a few hours on surfaces so you can become infected by touching something like a doorknob or telephone that has been touched by someone with the flu and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. This is why frequent hand washing or use of an alcohol-based hand gel is so important.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?**

The symptoms of H1N1 are indistinguishable from seasonal flu and consist most commonly of sudden onset of fever (100 or greater) with cough or fever with sore throat. Other symptoms may include runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue. It is different from a 'stomach bug' which usually consists of nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea and from the common cold which is usually milder and does not come on as quickly.

### **How severe is illness associated with novel H1N1 flu virus?**

Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

Source: Centers for Disease Control

Information for Students

### **Travel and Closures**

There are no restrictions on travel due to flu anywhere in the world.

The current advice of the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control is that travel restrictions are not useful in dealing with a flu pandemic.

Some countries are screening arriving passengers at airports and other ports of entry. An up to date report on this is at [wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/id/1194.aspx](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/content/id/1194.aspx).

The CDC currently recommends that schools not be closed if the virus is discovered among students or staff. This recommendation does not apply in every city and country around the world, however. Brown University will follow the directives of local authorities and Brown on-site personnel abroad make their plans with that in mind.

Other Considerations

## **Vaccinations**

Vaccines for both seasonal flu and H1N1 flu will become available worldwide sometime this fall—for seasonal flu in September and for H1N1 later in the fall or early winter. Brown program sites will make information on where to go for the vaccines available to students as soon as this information is made available to them.

## **If you are ill**

Please keep the on-site staff aware of your symptoms and follow their instructions.

Individuals who are sick with flu symptoms should stay home from school or work and, to the extent possible, limit contact with others, except to seek medical care, for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

High risk individuals (those who are pregnant; have significant asthma or other respiratory illness, significant chronic cardiovascular, liver, blood, neurologic disease or diabetes, HIV, or are taking immunosuppressive drugs) should contact their health care provider immediately if they become ill and are strongly urged to get the seasonal flu vaccine.

The CDC provides a useful guide to home care for people with flu. We recommend that ill students follow this advice: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm).

## **Useful websites:**

International SOS guidance: <http://www.internationalsos.com/pandemicpreparedness/>

CDC General H1N1 Flu Information: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general\\_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm)

H1N1 Flu FAQs: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm)

Home Care Guidance: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance\\_homecare.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm)

World Health Organization: [www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/)