

June 12, 2009

NSDA Member Update – H1N1 Human Swine Flu Outbreak

Yesterday, the WHO raised the pandemic alert to level 6. A level 6 indicates a wide geographic spread to the disease, **not** an increase in its severity. As such, it's important as health professionals that members do their utmost to minimize further spread of the disease.

The best way for members and their staff (including front office staff) to stay healthy is to take preventative action:

wash hands thoroughly and often;

use an arm to cover coughs and sneezes; and

frequently clean and disinfect common surfaces and items such as doorknobs and counters.

If staff or patients have influenza-like symptoms (such as fever, new/worse cough or shortness of breath) they should stay home. If symptoms worsen, they should seek medical attention. Patients who arrive in the office with flu-like symptoms for **elective** dental care should be asked to re-book their appointments for a later date.

If the patient requires **urgent or emergency treatment**, standard precautions, plus the use of N95 masks, provide appropriate protection to the clinical staff. To avoid contamination of other patients and non-clinical staff, patients presenting a risk should be asked to wear masks and be placed in a segregated area as soon as possible after their arrival.

It's important to understand that it is safe to go to work and school, participate in school activities and to socialize, if you do not have influenza-like symptoms.

Attached below are links to the most recent updates from the Nova Scotia Departments of Health and Health Promotion & Protection, and from the Canadian Dental Association.

All NSDA updates will be posted for continuing reference on the NSDA website at www.nsdental.org under Dentist Resources / Practice Management A-Z / under "S" for swine.

NS Departments of Health and Health Protection & Promotion

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/news/smr/20090611002health-hpp.asp>

June 11, 2009

Nova Scotia's public health system continues to track and respond to H1N1 (human

swine influenza). At this time, that work will not be affected by the World Health Organization's (WHO) decision today, June 11, to raise the pandemic alert to level 6.

"Moving to level 6 simply means that the virus has spread to additional countries. It does not mean that the virus has become more severe," said Dr. Robert Strang, chief public health officer for the province.

"However, being at the World Health Organization's highest alert phase does underline the urgency of the work we are doing and the importance of remaining vigilant."

The outbreak is not over. Cases of H1N1 continue to be reported in Nova Scotia. So far, the virus is behaving like a typical flu-like illness, and most people are being treated at home. However, many experts believe the virus could become more common and more severe.

Two new cases have been reported in the past seven days. The total number of cases reported in Nova Scotia since the outbreak began on April 26 is now 79.

Nova Scotia continues to work closely with provincial and territorial partners, as well as the Public Health Agency of Canada, to continually assess the H1N1 situation and adapt strategy as required. This includes monitoring the more severe cases in northern Manitoba and Nunavut.

People are reminded that the best way to stay healthy is to take preventative action: washing hands thoroughly and often; using an arm to cover coughs and sneezes; and frequently cleaning and disinfecting common surfaces and items such as doorknobs and counters.

If people have influenza-like symptoms they should stay home and minimize contact with family members. If symptoms worsen, they should visit a physician or a walk-in clinic.

It is important for Nova Scotians to understand that it is safe to go to work and school, participate in school activities and to socialize, if they do not have influenza-like symptoms.

For more information on H1N1 (human swine influenza), visit www.gov.ns.ca .

CDA



CDAlert is a members-only email newsletter. These electronic bulletins are special alerts of an urgent or time-sensitive nature that are often of direct and immediate benefit to the Association's members. We appreciate receiving your feedback. [Email us](#) with your questions or comments.

CDAlert – H1N1 Influenza Pandemic Alert Raised to Phase 6

The World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the influenza A (H1N1) virus as a global pandemic, by raising the pandemic alert level from Phase 5 to Phase 6.

The WHO announcement reflects an increase in the spread of the virus to more countries and regions throughout the world, not an increase in the severity of the virus.

According to the WHO, 74 countries have officially reported 28,774 cases of influenza A (H1N1) infection as of today. In Canada, there have been 2,978 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza A (H1N1) virus reported to the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) by the provinces and territories as of June 10, 2009.

CDA would like to remind dentists to continue following the most recent guidance documents for clinicians in ambulatory care settings, issued by PHAC in April 2009. These guidelines are available at:

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine-porcine/hp-ps-info_amb-eng.php?option=share

PHAC recommends that health care workers wear an N95-approved respirator mask or equivalent, for protection against airborne particles during aerosol-generating procedures with patients suspected of having an influenza-like illness. This advice applies when treating patients with any airborne disease and is not specific to the H1N1 virus.

Dentists should therefore try to keep a sufficient quantity of N95 or equivalent respirator masks to meet the needs of their dental practice at all times.

Although a surgical mask does not provide adequate respiratory protection against airborne infections, a surgical mask can be worn in the absence of an N95 or equivalent

mask, as it may provide some protection against airborne particles.

For more information on the World Health Organization's Phase 6 definition:

www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/levels_pandemic_alert/en/index.html

For more information on the influenza A (H1N1) virus pandemic, please refer to previous CDAAlert communications:

[April 29, 2009 – CDAAlert – Update on Human Swine Influenza Outbreak](#)