



**Nova Scotia
Dental
Association**

October 26, 2009
NSDA Member Update #3
H1N1 Human Swine Flu Outbreak

Since the last member update in June, much has progressed in the health communities' and governments' understanding of and response to H1N1.

NSDA staff and the Pandemic Working Group members, including its Chair, Dr. Debora Matthews, have met numerous times with Department of Health throughout the summer and early fall in order to provide members with the most up-to-date and relevant information.

This member update covers:

- 1) Patient triage
- 2) Dentist and staff health and safety
- 3) N95 respirators
- 4) Vaccinations

PATIENT TRIAGE

What you should know

- The best way for members, staff and patients to stay healthy is to take preventative action.

What you should do

- 1) **Triage your patients**
 - a. Ensure staff completing patient recalls include a question asking if the patient is experiencing influenza-like symptoms (such as fever, new/worsening cough, shortness of breath). If so, elective care should be rescheduled.

- b. Patients arriving at the office for elective care with flu like symptoms should be asked to re-book for a later date.
- c. Urgent or emergency patients with suspected or confirmed H1N1 should be asked to wear a mask and be segregated from other patients. Ideally, these patients could be treated after-hours or at the end of the day to lessen contact with others.

2) **Post signage to educate patients**

- a. Post signs on your entrance asking people to stop if they are feeling ill and return home to phone for a new appointment time. A poster you can personalize for your office is included in this mailing.

Post hand washing signs throughout your office to help spread the prevention message. Hand washing posters can be downloaded from the NS Department of Health website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/cdpc/h1n1-influenza-posters.asp>

DENTIST AND STAFF HEALTH & SAFETY

What you should know

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employers and employees to work together to identify and address health and safety issues at the worksite.
- In a pandemic situation, it's the employer's responsibility to implement measures to address health and safety protocols that must be followed.
- It is expected that during the course of the influenza season, fully 1/3 of employees will contract H1N1 and therefore be off work.

What you should do

1) **Take measures to slow the spread of viruses**

- a. Standard infection prevention and control measures should be used at all times. Additional measures should be employed for treatment of suspected or known H1N1 cases (*see the N95 Respirators section, below*).
- b. Additional prevention and control measures may include more frequent cleaning of equipment and surfaces in opertories and the public areas (washrooms, waiting areas) of the practice.
- c. Diligent hand washing for employers, employees and patients should be encouraged.
- d. Practice good cough and sneeze hygiene. This means coughing or sneezing into your elbow (sleeve) or using a tissue that is then disposed.
- e. The Department of Health suggests that childrens' soft toys in waiting rooms be removed as child-play tends to have a high hand-to-mouth transmission opportunity. If hard/non-porous toys remain, they should be thoroughly cleaned at least two times a day. Magazines should be recycled at least once a month.

2) **Stay at home if you're feeling unwell**

- a. If you are experiencing influenza-like symptoms. Do not come to work. A fact sheet on home management of the flu may be found at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/h1n1-home-management.pdf>
- b. While home quarantining of H1N1 patients is still advised, the Department of Health's earlier directive for family members not showing symptoms to also be quarantined has been reversed.
- c. Originally the Department of Health advised staying at home for at least 7 days. This has been revised with the advice to stay at home for as long as symptoms are present (approximately 4-5 days). A persistent cough may be present past this time, but should not preclude returning to normal activities.

3) **Manage staff with clear information and policies**

- a. Make sure your staff is aware of the practice's sickness policies.

- b. Please consider not requiring your employees to go to a doctor for a sick note. This ensures health services are available to those most in need.
- c. Pregnant women (especially in the second or third trimester) are at a higher risk of complications if they get H1N1. The Department of Health does not recommend pregnant women stay home from work as a preventative measure, as the H1N1 virus is already present in the community and exposure can happen anywhere.
- d. The Departments of Health and Labour & Workforce Development have created a Q&A document for employers and employees. This is a valuable resource. It can be downloaded at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/H1N1-Workplace-QAs.pdf>

N95 RESPIRATORS

What you should know

- Patients with influenza-like symptoms or confirmed H1N1 should have elective dental work re-scheduled.
- The Department of Health recognizes that aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMP) create a transmission opportunity for H1N1. The Department also recognizes that many dental procedures create AGMPs.
- If the dentist chooses to treat a suspected or confirmed H1N1 patient with a clinical emergency, the NS Department of Health strongly advises that N95 respirators be worn to help protect against transmission.
- If you use a N95 respirator, it must be fit tested.
- Employees, such as dental assistants, who will be within 2 meters (6 feet) of the H1N1 patient during treatment where there is potential for an AGMP, should also be wearing N95 respirator. These employees must also be fit tested.
- Employees who are not within 2 meters (6 feet) of a H1N1 patient during treatment do not need to wear or be fit tested for N95 respirator.

What you should do

- 1) **Develop a plan for triaging and treating H1N1 patients presenting with an emergency need requiring clinical intervention**
 - a. Establish how you will triage patients with suspected or confirmed H1N1. Some dentists may choose to partner with other practices in their area to manage these cases.
 - b. If you plan to treat emergency H1N1 patients with clinical intervention, check with your usual dental suppliers and industrial supply houses to secure a sufficient supply of N95 respirators for your needs.
 - c. Determine if staff (such as a dental assistant) will be included in the patient treatment protocol. According to Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, any staff who are within a 2 meter (6 foot) range of an AGMP must also wear – and be fit tested for – a N95 mask.

- 2) **Get fit tested for the N95 respirator**
 - a. The Occupational Health & Safety Department has supplied the NSDA with a list of recognized N95 respirator fit testers. This reference list is attached.
 - b. If you are going to be wearing an N95 respirator, according to Occupational Health & Safety, you must be fit tested.

VACCINATIONS

What you should know

- The most recent advisories from the Department of Health were issued on October 22, 2009. They state that this flu season's vaccination roll out will be in three phases:

Phase one – Regular seasonal flu shots given only to seniors 65+ and residents of long-term facilities. Phase one is underway.

Phase two – H1N1 vaccinations will be available for all Nova Scotians who need and want one. This program will begin roll out the week of October 26.

Phase three – Seasonal flu shots will be given to the usual risk groups (eg. seniors, adults with chronic cardiac or pulmonary disorders). Phase three will occur after the H1N1 vaccinations. No dates have been announced.

- Vaccinations do not remove the necessity of wearing an N95 respirator when treating a suspected or confirmed H1N1 patient with a clinical intervention.

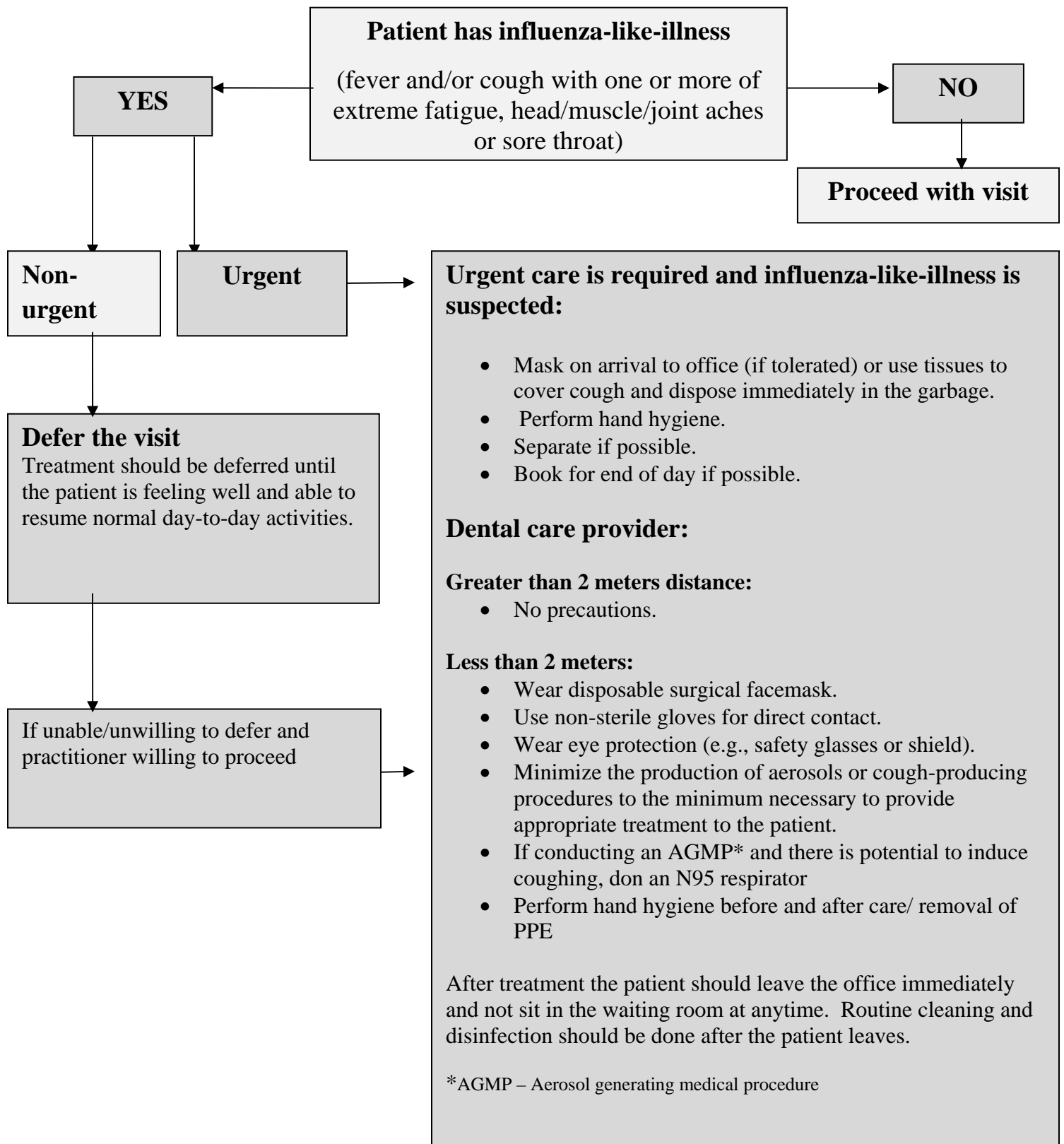
What you should do

Consider getting a H1N1 and a seasonal flu vaccination

- a. As health care workers, the Department of Health strongly advises dentists and their employees to get vaccinated.
- b. Plans are currently being announced for mass public H1N1 inoculations. The Department of Health will continue to widely publicize the details for your area. Visit the Department of Health's website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/h1n1/> and click on the "Where to Get Vaccinated" icon for more information.

H1N1/Influenza Like Illness Patient Assessment Non-Hospital Setting

Call and/or place a sign at reception





Are you feeling sick today?

BEFORE YOU ENTER please reschedule your appointment by phone if you have any of the following symptoms:

- forceful cough
- muscle aches
- sore throat

**Help STOP the
spread of flu.**

RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES CAN SPREAD EASILY. In an effort to protect our patients and staff we ask that you contact our office by phone to reschedule. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION.**

PRACTICE _____

PHONE NUMBER _____



**DIRTY HANDS SPREAD INFECTION.
WASH UP.**




NOVA SCOTIA
Health Promotion
and Protection



N95 Fit Testers

PLEASE NOTE:

The Department of Occupational Health and Safety provided a list of N95 fit testers to the NSDA. The NSDA office has contacted this list to confirm their ability to complete testing. Most companies listed will travel throughout the province to provide their services. Cost will depend on the amount of people being tested and any associated travel required. It has been suggested to us that practices may want to coordinate their testing to take advantage of group rates, when available.

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