



## Influenza A(H1N1)

When news broke in late April and early May that an unusual number of influenza like illnesses had emerged in Mexico, the [Portland Office of Emergency Management](#) noticed and took immediate steps to implement its pandemic influenza plan. In the weeks that followed, we worked closely with county and state public health authorities to coordinate local response to the outbreak as it spread to throughout Portland and across Oregon.

Since the epidemic first emerged and became recognized by officials at the United Nations [World Health Organization](#) as this century's first pandemic, emergency managers have worked closely with city bureaus to prepare for the return of influenza A(H1N1) with the seasonal flu this fall. Those preparations focus on measures to

- Protect city employees,
- Care for vulnerable populations,
- Assist county public health officials, and
- Maintain city essential services.

Although influenza A(H1N1) has receded from its top position in the news, it certainly has not gone away. Throughout the summer, infection rates have remained higher than normal, especially among young people attending camps and similar activities. Meanwhile, the southern hemisphere has entered its flu season, and the new A(H1N1) virus has displaced the usual seasonal strains and burdened public health response systems in several countries.

Based on the best available information, we expect absenteeism due to infection and dependent care responsibilities could peak somewhere between 20 to 40 percent of the workforce this fall when the flu season returns. As such, city employees and the general public should take steps now to protect themselves and their families.

### ***What You Need to Know***

- Frequent [hand washing](#) and [covering coughs](#) are the best protection against the spread of this disease. Alcohol-based disinfectants or wipes may be used to [clean hands](#) and hard surfaces.
- If you experience [symptoms](#) of influenza like illness – STAY HOME. Avoiding contact with others will limit the spread of disease. Do not [return to work](#) until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.



- Typical [symptoms](#) of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy or runny nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Public health authorities have reported some confirmed cases in which those infected also experienced vomiting or diarrhea.
- Young adults, [small children](#), [pregnant women](#), and people with underlying health or medical conditions, including asthma, emphysema, pulmonary edema, [heart disease](#), diabetes, [HIV/AIDS](#), and obesity are at greater risk of infection and serious complications.
- Some older adults (age 50 and over) may have limited immunity due to exposure to similar virus strains when they were younger.
- Public health authorities have developed [guidelines](#) for administering vaccinations to vulnerable populations on a risk prioritized basis.
- When a [new vaccine](#) becomes available it will be administered in addition to the seasonal influenza vaccine already available. Vulnerable individuals should plan to receive both vaccine courses.

### ***What We Are Doing***

- Monitoring public health advice and infection data.
- Sharing information to help people plan and prepare.
- Working with [public health authorities](#) to support community vaccination and treatment plans.
- Working with bureau managers to review and reinforce [continuity of operations plans](#).
- Working with [Bureau of Human Resources](#) and risk management staff to develop [guidelines](#) for leave usage, teleworking, and flexible staffing and scheduling alternatives to maintain city services.

### ***What You Can Do***

- Make [plans](#) now for [dependent care](#) during illness or school closures. Discuss your plans with your family, your supervisor, and co-workers.
- Determine whether you are at increased risk of infection or complications. If so, plan to get vaccinated. Contact your family doctor or workplace safety and health



representative for more information about receiving the vaccine when it becomes available.

- Review and practice effective infection control measures, including frequent [hand washing](#), cough covering, and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.

### ***Where You Can Get More Information***

- [www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov)
- [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)
- [www.mchealth.org/swineflu/](http://www.mchealth.org/swineflu/)
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)