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GENERAL INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

RE: H1N1 (previously known as “swine-flu”)

Issues Covered:

1. General Information
- 2. Mandatory Sanitation Requirements**
3. Information to Share with Employees - 8 recommendations to share with staff
4. Response to an Employee Exhibiting Symptoms
5. Response to an Employee with Family Members Confirmed to Have H1N1
6. Enforcement of Sending Employees “Not Fit for Duty” Home
7. HIPAA Q&A
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1. GENERAL INFORMATION:

What is the H1N1 Flu?

The 2009 H1N1 virus (previously known as “swine flu”) is a respiratory disease that is caused by type A (H1N1) influenza viruses that originally were traced to pigs and then mutated into a strain that is a combination of pig, avian and human strains of influenza viruses. While there have been continual outbreaks in the pig population, humans do not normally get this form of H1N1 virus. But human infections have happened. In the past, transmissions among humans were limited to no more than three people. What’s different about this strain of influenza is that the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that it is contagious and is spreading from human to human in greater numbers. However, what we don’t know is exactly how easily the virus spreads from one person to another.

Is the H1N1 flu the same as an ordinary seasonal flu?

The 2009 H1N1 virus symptoms are similar to the symptoms of more typical strains of human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 virus infections. As seen with seasonal flu, H1N1 virus may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How does H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of this H1N1 virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something that has flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing his or her hands.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 virus to others?

Infected people may be able to pass the virus to others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. People with H1N1 virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic. The **CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.** (This is a change from the previous recommendation that ill persons stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer.) Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of getting contaminated with the H1N1 virus from these common surfaces.

2. MANDATORY SANITATION:

OPERATIONS:

Please implement the following steps **immediately:**

- Additional Hand Sanitizer – please purchase anti-bacterial hand sanitizer and have it available in areas where people are in close proximity or using common things (Guest Restrooms, Host Stand, Server stations, terminals)
- Have alcohol wipes for use on the phone handsets and touch screens and wipe down hourly
- Please increase the amount of restroom cleaning visits to every ½ hr and ensure that while they are being cleaned, sanitizing solution (in the appropriately labeled squeeze bottle) is being used to disinfect faucets **and** door handles.
- Host staff regularly wipe the front door handles (inside and out) with sanitizing solution hourly.
- Every pre-shift/pit stop: revisit hand washing and sanitation procedures.

3. INFORMATION TO SHARE WITH EMPLOYEES:

You can protect yourself and others by following these key action steps:

- 1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle** through rest, diet, exercise, and relaxation.
- 2. Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- 3. Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.** Germs spread this way.
- 4. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue,** or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash receptacles.
- 5. Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean,** such as telephones, computer keyboards, doorknobs, etc.
- 6. Do not use other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment.** If you need to use a co-worker's phone, desk or other equipment, clean it first.
- 7. Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home.**

Symptoms of flu include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or chills **and** cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. CDC recommends that sick workers stay home if they are sick with flu-like illness until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

8. Get vaccinated against seasonal flu when vaccine is available in your area. If you are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications you should receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.

4. RESPONSE TO AN EMPLOYEE EXHIBITING SYMPTOMS:

- Address employee directly and send them home (make every effort to make up hours when employee is fit for duty). They should not return to work until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever.
- Ensure sanitation of all areas of the restaurant
- Address employees/associates and prohibit any discussions of any employee/guest health status

5. RESPONSE TO AN EMPLOYEE WITH FAMILY MEMBERS CONFIRMED TO HAVE H1N1:

- Make every effort to ensure the health and safety of your employees by recommending the employee stay home and monitor themselves for symptoms. (Make every effort to make up hours when employee is fit for duty)
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for an ill family member. You should be aware that more workers may need to stay at home to care for ill children or other ill family members than is usual.

6. ENFORCEMENT OF SENDING EMPLOYEES NOT FIT FOR DUTY HOME

- Maintain diligence in ensuring a safe and secure workplace for employees/associates/guests
- Do not insist on seeking medical attention when sending an employee home; however, strongly suggest it
- Determine your policy in advance, as to whether compensation will be provided if someone is sent home due to illness.

7. HIPAA Q& A

- **May an employer send home a symptomatic employee?**
- Yes. However, given that the symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to a variety of other illnesses, the employee may simply be suffering from allergies so you cannot require them to stay out if they indicate they are well enough to return to work.
- **May the employer require that a symptomatic employee have a H1N1 test?**

- No. The decision to administer a flu test is a *medical* decision that can only be made by a medical professional who is the employee's treating Health Care Provider or another HCP with public health authority.
- **Should an employer notify its employees that a coworker has been diagnosed with H1N1?**
- No. The notification may be an invasion of the stricken employee's privacy under HIPAA. The employer may be at risk of disseminating incorrect information. Health Care Providers who have a patient with swine flu have a legal obligation to report the case to the local public health authorities.
- **What medical confirmation can an employer demand from a sick employee?**
- An employer is not entitled to medical confirmation from an employee's healthcare provider (HCP) unless such information is authorized by statute or an employer's policies or plans like short-term disability (STD) plans for medical certification when a claim is filed. A leave request under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) as a matter of statute provides for medical certification.