

Planning For Gatherings and Events During 2009/2010 Influenza Season

October 2009



creating healthy communities
together

This year it's a different flu season. The H1N1 Pandemic influenza virus has spread across the world and is expected to be part of the upcoming flu season. It is essential to have strategies in place to prevent the spread.

People gather together in large groups frequently in communities across Huron County for church services, sporting events, concerts, funerals, social and cultural celebrations and weddings. People also gather at schools, businesses and clubs or groups. During these events, people may come in close contact with each other in crowds and by shaking hands or hugging. This may increase the risk of spreading influenza and the H1N1 influenza virus. People who attend these events may become infected and then spread it to others after the event.

People who are at high risk of complications from H1N1 influenza who choose to attend events, should consider their risk of exposure.

The following prevention strategies are recommended to reduce the spread of all influenza in communities:

Hand Hygiene

- Provide adequate supplies of soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs at meeting places and during events or gatherings. Hand washing with soap and water for at least 15 seconds is the most effective way to prevent the spread of influenza and other germs that can make people sick. If hand washing facilities are not available, alcohol-based hand rubs with 60-90% alcohol should be in multiple locations to encourage frequent hand hygiene.
- Everyone should practice proper hand hygiene: after touching surfaces that others may have touched; before eating or drinking or preparing meals; after using the washroom; and after sneezing, coughing or wiping their nose.
- Everyone should be encouraged to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth with their hands as influenza can spread this way.
- Place posters that encourage hand hygiene in high traffic areas.

Practice Respiratory Etiquette

- Everyone should cough or sneeze into their elbow or upper sleeve and not into their hands.
- If tissues are used to cover coughs and sneezes they should be thrown in the garbage immediately, followed by hand hygiene.

See reverse

Resources for Planning a Gathering

Download these posters:

Stop the Spread Information Poster
www.huroncounty.ca/health

Stop the Spread Visual Poster
www.huroncounty.ca/health

How to Handwash Instructions
www.justcleanyourhands.ca/pdf/10_11_Hand_wash_7Feb08.pdf

How to Handrub Instructions
www.justcleanyourhands.ca/pdf/10_14_Handrub_07Feb08.pdf

"Did You Wash Your Hands?" Poster
www.huroncounty.ca/health

Put the posters:

- At entrances
- Near food areas
- In well-lit places
- High traffic areas
- On doors
- In washrooms

Rotate posters every 2-3 months for renewed public attention.

Disinfect Frequently Touched Surfaces Often

- The influenza virus can survive for up to 48 hours on some surfaces. Frequent cleaning of commonly touched surfaces and objects can help reduce the spread of the virus. Commercially available cleaning products are all that is needed to kill the influenza virus.
- High traffic and common areas should be cleaned frequently with particular attention to handles, buttons, switches, handrails, push bars and countertops.
- People should not share items such as drinking cups, eating utensils, towels etc.

Stay Home if You are Sick

- People who are ill should be encouraged not to attend the event and to stay home.
- Based on currently available information, masks and respirators are not recommended to attend community events.
- Event organizers should consider alternative options and venues for participation (for example remote, web-based viewing sites).

Prevention strategies may be subject to change based on local influenza activity and evolving information. Check the Huron County Health Unit website www.huroncounty.ca/health regularly before events for the most current information and recommendations.