

April 30, 2009

H1N1 (Swine) Influenza Update from Superintendent/President José M. Ortiz, Ed.D.

Allan Hancock College is committed to keeping the college community informed about the H1N1 (swine) flu virus as it relates to our campus. This is a follow-up to information provided to all staff April 27 by our Health Services office.

Currently, we are not aware of any suspected cases of H1N1 flu involving either students or staff at any Allan Hancock College location. Classes and college operations are continuing as usual. However, it is important that each of us take necessary precautions to prevent the potential spread of infection.

Please carefully read—and heed—the following:

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 Influenza (also known as swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of H1N1 flu happen regularly in pigs. Most commonly, human cases of H1N1 flu happen in people who are around pigs, but it is also possible for H1N1 flu viruses to spread from person to person.

Is this H1N1 flu virus contagious?

The CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

How do you catch H1N1 flu?

Spread of H1N1 flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with a person with H1N1 flu. Human-to-human spread of H1N1 flu has been documented and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu. The flu is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing and by hand-to-object contact by infected people.
- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with H1N1 flu viruses.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu in people?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to those caused by the usual strains of influenza virus:

- Fever above 100 degrees
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Chills
- Fatigue
- And rarely, stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

What should I do if I become ill with flu-like symptoms?

- Stay home and limit your contact with others.
- Contact your health care provider to discuss your illness before seeking care. Students should either call their own healthcare provider or the college's Health Services office at 922-6966 ext. 3212 to arrange for an evaluation and instructions on how to care for themselves and reduce spreading the infection to others. Faculty and staff should contact their healthcare provider to receive the same information.
- Persons who have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, or are believed to be severely ill, should seek immediate medical attention.
- Students staying home due to illness should notify their instructors of their absence and make arrangements for missed class assignments.

What can I do to stay healthy?

These are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy, as influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Can I get H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork?

No. H1N1 influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Next steps:

Health Services Coordinator Diane Glaser is participating in a conference call with the chancellor's office this afternoon regarding the latest information on this topic. As new information becomes available, we will share it through email, the Allan Hancock College Web site, or both.

Below are links with additional resources:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed several sites:

General information about H1N1 flu: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>

Swine Influenza and You: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/swineflu_you.htm

Key Facts Sheet: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key_facts.htm

U. S. Health & Human Services Office: www.hhs.gov

American College Health Association: http://www.acha.org/info_resources/flu_H1N1_2009.cfm

U. S. Government swine/avian/pandemic flu information: www.pandemicflu.gov

U.S. Department of State travel alert for Mexico:

http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_4488.html