



GUIDANCE FOR FAITH BASED COMMUNITIES PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF PANDEMIC H1N1 INFLUENZA

This guidance is based on current knowledge and is subject to updates. This guidance document should be read in conjunction with relevant Public Health Agency of Canada www.phac-aspc.gc.ca and SK Health <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza-monitor> documents.

What is Pandemic H1N1 Influenza and how is it spread?

- Influenza like illness (ILI): acute onset of fever and cough and one or more of: sore throat, muscle aches, joint pain, or weakness. Vomiting/diarrhea may be present and fever may not be prominent
- Transmission: *directly* from person to person through coughing or sneezing, and *indirect* from touching contaminated surfaces and objects and then touching the eyes/nose/mouth
- Severity: ranges from mild to severe. Most H1N1 illness to date has been relatively mild. It appears to be more severe mainly in *vulnerable groups* such persons with underlying illnesses including chronic lung diseases, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, immune deficiency, and in the 2nd and 3rd trimester of pregnancy.
- Contagious: transmission is most likely to occur during the first few days of obvious ILI illness. It is recommended that persons who are ill with ILI symptoms should stay home from work, school, community events, and faith based congregations until symptom free.

Should faith based functions be cancelled?

Cancellations are not recommended at this time. Decisions about cancelling any public gathering will be addressed individually between local authorities and public health officials. Some group activities may carry a higher risk for transmission of ILI. Contact your local public health office for assistance.

What can the faithful community do to prepare for Pandemic H1N1 Influenza?

- All staff and volunteers should wash their hands or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer before and after opening/closing service, Mass and Communion, etc.
- Recognize common practices in a congregation that increase the risk of spreading influenza: shaking or holding hands, receiving communion, Sunday school or childcare rooms, social times and visits to facilities, etc. Develop adaptations that reduce/prevent the spread of illness i.e. alternatives for greeting and passing the peace, such as eye contact, smile, bow your head, etc. Alternatives to mass/communion, such as

pouring from chalice into individual cups and placing bread onto the hands and not on the tongue.

- Post and encourage correct hand washing <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/iif-vcg/wh-lm-eng.php#a> and cough and sneeze etiquette <http://www.fightflu.ca/prot-eng.html>.
- Ensure wash stations are well supplied. In addition, maintain alternative hand sanitizers, tissues and waste receptacles. Alcohol based hand sanitizers should only be made available under appropriate supervision.
- Frequently touched surfaces should be wiped at least twice daily and as necessary i.e. doorknobs, faucet handles, toys, etc. with household or commercially available cleaners.
- Develop protocols for visiting hospitals and nursing homes and abide by isolation restrictions when in place.

If I am not feeling well should I attend service?

Whether you are a service participant, volunteer or congregation it is recommended you stay home if you have symptoms of ILI. Avoid all public contact (i.e. work, shopping, etc.) and stay home until symptoms resolve.

If concerns/questions, contact your local Public Health Office or HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002 for advice or visit www.healthlineonline.ca