

## **H1N1 FACT SHEET FOR UTSA STAFF**

---

Late last spring, we were introduced to the H1N1 flu virus. At first, it was termed “swine flu,” then “North American Flu,” before finally settling on the moniker “H1N1 flu.” As the season progresses, we begin to see more stories in the media concerning this threat, its potential severity and impact. It is important for the UTSA community to understand protective actions that we as individuals can take, the signs and symptoms of the virus and actions to take if infected.

For disease prevention and response information, UTSA relies on the advice of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and information provided by the Texas Department of State Health Services and the City of San Antonio’s Metropolitan Health District. Policies are in place to address most of the issues that will result from an outbreak of H1N1 in the San Antonio area.

### **What are the H1N1 signs and symptoms?**

- Fever 100° F. or higher with a median temperature of 102° F., and either sore throat or cough
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea)

### **According to the CDC, what groups are at a higher risk of being impacted by H1N1?**

- All people ages 6 months-24 years
- Pregnant women
- Caregiver of children younger than 6 months.
- Health care providers, Target First Responders
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Those aged 25-64, those with chronic respiratory ailments, asthma, neurological disorders, diabetes and immunodeficiency

### **What can I do to stay healthy?**

- Stay informed. Reading this article is an excellent first step but don’t stop there. Go to informational Web sites such as [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov), [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) or [texasflu.org](http://texasflu.org) to stay up-to-date on this evolving situation.
- Influenza spreads person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people, so:
  - 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 hands cleaners are also effective.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
  - Minimize your time with other people who are showing flu-like symptoms.
- Get vaccinated. Get the seasonal flu vaccination, as well as the H1N1 vaccination (with booster) when it becomes available. These are different vaccines and one vaccine will not protect you against the other kind of flu.
- Discuss with your supervisor what accommodations might be required in the event of a departmental outbreak.

### **What should I do if I get sick?**

- Seek medical attention if needed.
- If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, the CDC recommends staying home and avoiding contact with other people.
- Individuals with influenza-like illness should remain at home and away from other people until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, or signs of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick. Staying away means that you should not leave except to seek medical care. Avoid normal activities including work, school, travel, shopping, social events and public gatherings.
- If you have chronic illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. Underlying medical conditions that often require special attention for avoiding severe complications with flu include asthma and diabetes. If you are living with a chronic disease, check with your doctor about whether flu should be a more serious concern for you.

### **What should I expect when I see a doctor?**

Physicians may vary in the advice they offer according to the particular situation, so expect that your physician's advice may deviate from the following information. However, this should help prepare you for a visit to your physician during this flu season.

- Your physician may have special plans for dealing with those who present with flu-like symptoms. For example, he or she may ask that you put on a mask while waiting to be seen or move you into another waiting area to reduce the chances of spreading the flu.
- Your physician will most certainly perform an initial evaluation that likely will include the following: gathering of history of your past and current illnesses to include current symptoms, taking your vital signs and conducting an examination.
- Based on the results, your physician may decide to perform additional testing. The additional testing, if done, will determine treatment (i.e., antibiotics or antivirals) or your physician may decide that the best course of action would be using some type of over-the-counter medication that might be helpful and appropriate for you while you are recovering from your illness.
- Note: Based on your physician's examination and experience, your condition may not warrant an antibiotic or antiviral.
- If concerned about your physician's recommendations, ask questions and allow your physician to assist you in understanding your illness and his or her recommended individualized treatment plan for you.

### **Do I need to bring in a doctor's note if I take time off for flu-like symptoms?**

- Yes. According to Chapter 4.20 of the UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures, section II, "Sick Leave," *to be eligible to use accumulated sick leave without a deduction in salary during a continuous period of more than three (3) work days, an employee absent due to sickness, injury or pregnancy and confinement shall contact*

*the Human Resources department, leave management section, and provide a doctor's certificate showing the cause or nature of the condition or another written statement, which is acceptable to the university, of the facts concerning the condition. The university may require a doctor's certificate or other written statement of the facts for sick leave without a deduction in salary taken during a continuous period of three or fewer work days.*

For more information, contact the HR leave management department at (210) 458-4250.

### **How can I fulfill my work commitment to UTSA if I am affected by H1N1?**

- These options must be coordinated and approved by the employee's supervisor and Human Resources.
  - Flexible work schedules, or "flex time," may be an alternative to fulfill your work commitment to UTSA and to minimize contact with H1N1; however, not all jobs can be adapted to a flexible work schedule. All employees should communicate their interest to flex their work schedule through their immediate supervisors. Decisions on flex time requests will be made in accordance to HOP 4.29, "Hours of work and breaks for staff (non-faculty) employees."
  - While UTSA does not have a telecommuting policy, there are specific practices that have been followed and guidance that can be provided. Supervisors who receive requests from their employees to telecommute should contact HR Leave Management at (210) 458-4250 for guidance. Decisions on telecommuting requests will be based on the critical nature of the function and if the employee obtains medical clearance from their doctor to work from home. Telecommuting applies only to regular, full-time and part-time Classified Exempt and Administrative and Professional (A&P) employees

### **What should I do if someone in my work area is absent because of flu-like illness?**

- Contact the Occupational Health team in Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management at (210) 458-5304 or (210) 458-4420. The office will consult with work groups to provide detailed information and advice about disease prevention measures for the workplace. Note that:
  - Facilities Services housekeepers have been asked to do more frequent cleaning of surfaces that get touched often such as door handles, elevator buttons and handrails.
  - Most flu viruses cannot cause disease after 2-8 hours outside the body; disinfecting a room or work space may mean waiting overnight.
  - Each work group is encouraged to take responsibility in controlling disease. This means:
    - Sanitize public-use items often with disposable wipes.
    - Provide hand sanitizer at reception areas and shared spaces.
    - Encourage co-workers to stay home when they're sick.

**If my doctor tells me I have flu-like symptoms or my co-worker calls in sick with the flu, what should I call it?**

- Everything we know about H1N1 indicates that it is no more dangerous than seasonal flu, except that we can expect many more cases to occur in addition to seasonal flu cases. A heavy flu season will take a lot out of us in any case. We'll get through this more easily if we stick to the facts as we talk about it. If someone in your office or class is sick, say that, "They are sick." If you know, for a fact, that they have the flu, then say, "They have the flu."

**Important links:**

- CDC H1N1 Web site  
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- Texas Dept of State Health Services H1N1 Web site  
[www.texasflu.org](http://www.texasflu.org)
- San Antonio Metro Health H1N1 Info Web site  
<http://www.sanantonio.gov/health/H1N1.html>
- UTSA H1N1 Web page  
<http://www.utsa.edu/today/2009/08/swineflu4.cfm>

By understanding this evolving situation and remaining up-to-date, we are better able to distinguish fact from fiction. Through practicing protective actions, recognition of signs and symptoms of this virus and actions to take if infected we can react as a community to keep ourselves safe and lessen the impact of H1N1.

(September 2009)