



Region of Waterloo

PUBLIC HEALTH

FACT SHEET

H1N1 Flu Virus

Summer Camps: What Parents Should Know

What is H1N1 flu virus (Human Swine Flu)?

This H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory disease that causes symptoms similar to those of seasonal flu. The symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

How does H1N1 flu virus spread between people?

The virus is spread in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. The virus is easily killed by hand washing with warm water and soap, or with hand sanitizer.

Sometimes people may become infected by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. The virus can live on hard surfaces and be infectious for several hours. Household disinfectants will remove and kill the virus on these surfaces.

What else can I do to protect my child and our whole family from respiratory illnesses such as the H1N1 flu virus and its effects?

There are some simple but very effective ways to prevent contracting and spreading infectious diseases like influenza:

- Wash hands thoroughly and often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. It is recommended that alcohol-based hand sanitizer be used with supervision for young children or others (e.g. cognitively impaired adults) who may ingest the product.
- Keep commonly used surfaces and objects clean and disinfected.
- If you have flu-like symptoms, stay home until your fever is entirely gone and you are feeling better to prevent spreading your illness to others.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough. Or, alternatively, cough/sneeze into your upper sleeve.

You should also ensure that all of your child's routine immunizations are up-to-date prior to attending camp.

Is it safe to send my child to a summer camp?

If your child has flu-like symptoms, you should keep them at home.

Children who are healthy can attend camp. As a precaution however, make sure the camp has your contact information in case your child becomes unwell.

What precautions should my child take to stay healthy at summer camp?

Children attending summer camp should:

- Wash their hands often for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or clean their hands with alcohol-based hand rub.
- Use a tissue when sneezing/coughing, or sneeze/cough into their upper sleeve.
- Avoid sharing food, drinks and other personal items.
- See the camp's health care staff immediately for assessment if they feel unwell.

Will the camp be closed if there is a case of H1N1 flu virus?

Public health officials will consider each situation as it occurs. At this time camp closures are not anticipated for H1N1 flu, just as they would not occur for seasonal flu.

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What should camps be doing to prevent H1N1 flu transmission?

The Ontario government has issued detailed [guidelines for the prevention and management of the H1N1 flu virus in summer camps](#). These guidelines have been shared with summer camps in the province and are posted on the website of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

What precautions should the camp take if a person becomes ill at the camp?

Persons exhibiting flu-like symptoms should either be sent home or isolated until they are no longer symptomatic. This will prevent transmission of the virus to other campers and staff.

I think my child has been in contact with someone who was ill with this virus. What do I do?

If your child is feeling well, he or she can go to camp and continue regular activities.

Are there any medications available to prevent this flu?

Antiviral medications are available but are not recommended for people who are not ill. Antiviral medications may be recommended by a health care provider for treatment if your child develops flu-like symptoms and has a health condition placing them at higher risk for complications.

Should campers and staff wear masks at camp?

Evidence shows that wearing masks is not an effective measure for preventing the spread of flu among the general public and it is not recommended at camp.

What should camps be doing to keep their facilities clean and disinfected?

All facilities should clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are commonly touched by multiple people such as doorknobs, faucet handles, toys and shared flash lights to prevent the transmission of viruses from person to person through contaminated hands. Regular disinfectants are sufficient for this purpose.

Are there specific measures needed to disinfect common indoor areas and bathrooms at the camp?

No enhanced cleaning or disinfecting is currently recommended.

Are drinking fountains being turned off?

No. Regular practices and precautions should be followed. Avoid touching the spout of drinking fountains with your mouth.

Will congregating at meal time be cancelled?

Meal times and locations will continue as usual.

Will any programming at camp be cancelled?

Planned activities will continue at this time.

Who can I talk to if I have more questions?

For general information, call *ServiceOntario INFOline* at 1-800-476-9708 (Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.)

For medical advice, call *TeleHealth Ontario* at 1-866-797-0000.

In Waterloo Region you can call Region of Waterloo Public Health at 519-883-2000.