



# DENTAL PROFESSIONALS

## H1N1 PREVENTION FOR DENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

H1N1 influenza (previously referred to as “swine flu”) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses. It is spread like seasonal flu, when respiratory droplets expelled into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes are inhaled or enter the eyes, nose or mouth of another person. Droplets can remain infectious on smooth surfaces for up to eight hours.

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu, and may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, runny or stuffy nose and tiredness. Some people have not had a fever with the illness, and some have also had vomiting and diarrhea.

### CONTROL MEASURES FOR THE DENTAL HEALTH CARE ENVIRONMENT

To prevent the spread of H1N1 and seasonal flu, dental health care facilities should take the following precautions:

- Encourage all dental health care professionals to get both a seasonal influenza and an H1N1 vaccination.
- Use patient-reminder calls to identify patients with flu-like illness and reschedule non-urgent visits until 24 hours after the patient is free of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Identify patients with flu-like illness at check-in. Reschedule non-urgent care.
- Place urgent care patients with flu-like illness in a treatment room with a closed door, if available. If not, use the treatment room farthest from other patients and employees, or place the patient in a separate area of the waiting room and ask the patient to wear a face mask if it is tolerable to do so.

*NOTE: Urgent dental treatment can be performed without the use of an airborne infection isolation (All) room because transmission of 2009 H1N1 influenza is thought not to occur over longer distances through the air, such as from one patient room to another.*

- Recommend employees put on PPE before entering treatment rooms.
  - Dental health care personnel should wear a NIOSH fit-tested, disposable N95 respirator when entering a treatment room with a patient that has flu-like illness and when performing dental procedures on patients with suspected or confirmed H1N1.
- If N95 respirators and/or fit-testing is not available, the dental office should transition to a prioritized use mode (i.e., non-fit-tested disposable N95 respirators or surgical facemasks can be considered as a lower level of protection for personnel at lower risk of exposure or lower risk of complication from influenza until fit-tested N95 respirators are available.
- Minimize spray and spatter, as customary, by using a dental dam and high-volume evacuator.
- Disinfect all surfaces in the facility frequently, especially those at highest risk for respiratory droplet contamination, and those with frequent hand contact.

### DENTAL HEALTH CARE PERSONNEL

Dental health care professionals should self-assess daily for flu-like symptoms. Those who develop symptoms of the flu should notify their supervisor immediately and should stay home until at least 24 hours after their fever has gone away, without the help of fever-reducing medication.

Dental health care professionals who are well, but who have a sick family member, can work as usual, but they should take everyday precautions, including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. They should monitor their health and notify their supervisor if they begin to feel sick.

Additional information for dental health care facilities can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/> or in the December 19, 2003 MMWR entitled “Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings” located at <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5217a1.htm>.