

Pandemic Planning – H1N1 Flu

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Flu season is upon us and we are being told to prepare for the H1N1 virus and the effects that it will have on individuals, businesses, services, and our society. But what does that mean?

H1N1 is a respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat, and lungs¹. People have no natural immunity to protect themselves against this virus¹. Statistics show that it is affecting more young and healthy people than the regular seasonal flu, which normally affects seniors and young children¹. People with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women may be at a greater risk¹. Estimated employee absentee rates range from 15-50%².

The symptoms for H1N1 flu¹:

Almost always:

- Cough (with no mucus at the beginning) and a fever

Common:

- Fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Decreased appetite
- Runny nose

Sometimes:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

For Adults:

- The incubation period is from 1 to 4 days, with symptoms usually showing after 2 days².
- Symptoms last 2 to 5 days².
- Employees should stay home for at least 24-hrs after the fever has gone².

What can individuals do?

- Social distancing – keeping a meter apart and minimizing gatherings.
- Respiratory etiquette – coughing into tissues, elbows, etc.
- Hand hygiene - washing your hands often with soap and warm water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizers on a regular basis.
- Maintain good household ventilation.
- Avoid touching your mouth and nose.
- Keep common surfaces disinfected.
- Use tissues and throw them away immediately after use.
- Avoid close contact with people who might be ill.
- Practice good health habits including getting adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, and keeping physically active.
- If you have the illness you should stay at home and keep away from work, school, or crowds.

What can businesses do?

- Encourage social distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, etc. (see above).
- Provide hand sanitation stations.
- Ensure cleanliness of surfaces where the virus may reside (door handles, elevator buttons, etc.) by additional cleaning, a more thorough cleaning, cleaning with disinfectants, etc.

1 - Public Health Agency of Canada's Key Facts on H1N1 Flu Virus.

2 - Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety's Pandemic Awareness training course.

- Where possible increase social distancing to 1 to 2 metres, such as separating workers by having them occupy every other cubicle, have staggered shifts, etc.
- Where applicable consider allowing employees to work from home.
- Have a policy where people (workers, contractors, or visitors) with flu symptoms are not allowed access to the workplace.
- Have up-to-date sick or leave policies. Will your current policy be adequate enough to protect your employees if a pandemic does occur?
- Update or create a Business Continuity Plan for a pandemic, including plans for:
 - No or limited services such as telecommunications, electricity, water, garbage disposal, suppliers, etc.
 - Reduced number of staff.
 - Increased or decreased demand on business.
- Stay informed of the situation through your local, provincial, national, and international websites.
- Communicate your plans and actions with your employees.
- Public Health Agency of Canada's H1N1 flu hotline – 1-800-454-8302

Resources:

- Federated Insurance – RecoveryWise resource (Business Continuity Plan) - www.federated.ca/en/loss-prevention/programs/recoverywise
- Federated Insurance – LP Bulletin on Pandemic Flu - www.federated.ca/loss-prevention/bulletins
- Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) – Pandemic Awareness – www.ccohs.ca/products/courses/pandemic_aware/
- Public Health Agency of Canada – H1N1 Alerts - www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerite/h1n1/index-eng.php
- World Health Organization – H1N1 - www.who.int/en/
- For H1N1 information – www.fightflu.ca
- For travel notices and advisories – www.voyage.gc.ca

At Federated Insurance, we believe Loss Prevention is a critical component of your Risk Management Program. **For more information, contact our Loss Prevention Department at 1-800-665-1934, or visit our website at www.federated.ca.**

The information provided is intended to be general in nature, and may not apply in your province. The advice of independent legal or other business advisors should be obtained in developing forms and procedures for your business. The recommendations are designed to reduce the risk of loss, but should not be construed as eliminating any risk or loss.

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