

H1N1 FLU UPDATE SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

Latest Developments

The New Brunswick Department of Health is aware that a couple of school boards in Quebec are recommending that pregnant teachers stay home and do not attend school. This is a special situation under local occupational health and safety laws that are not found anywhere else in Canada. It is ***not*** a recommendation of the Quebec public health agency or any other Canadian jurisdiction.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the New Brunswick Department of Health both recommend that pregnant women go about their lives normally. This includes attending their workplace including if this is a school setting. Pregnant women are no more likely to become infected than any other group. Avoiding work will not decrease that risk as they are still exposed in contact with their family, exposed in the supermarket and so on. While some pregnant women have fared badly when infected we recommend that they seek care early if they feel unwell rather than isolating themselves when well.

Guidance for GNB Employees

If you are presently experiencing the following symptoms:

Fever and cough, and one or more of:
sore throat,
body aches and
fatigue,

Please isolate yourself from others until symptom free and feeling well.

If you are sick enough that you would normally contact your health-care provider, please do so.

If you are not sick enough that you would normally contact your health-care provider, please isolate yourself from others.

This advice is available as a printable door poster: <http://www.gnb.ca/flu>

Self Isolation

Based on national discussions and agreement, the guidance for “self isolation” for those with Influenza-like Illness (ILI)¹ has been changed. Previously, the advice was “to self isolate for seven days”; however, current guidance recommends that individuals with ILI should:

- *Limit contact with others until free of symptoms and feeling well;*
- *As per previous advice, it is still recommended that people with ILI should decrease their contact with household members as well as others in the public; and,*
- *Individuals should consider ending self isolation when they are able to participate fully in normal daily activities. Parents of young children should consider ending their child(ren)’s self isolation when the child(ren) is/are able to participate fully in normal daily activities.*

¹ *ILI is defined as the acute onset of respiratory symptoms with fever and cough, and one or more of the following: sore throat, body aches, and fatigue. Vomiting and diarrhea may also be present and fever may not be prominent*

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination

While the seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against H1N1, receiving the seasonal flu shot is an important step toward staying healthy this flu season. Seasonal influenza is a serious disease and the influenza vaccine is an effective method of prevention. The influenza vaccine is safe, has minimal side effects and cannot give you influenza.

Employees are encouraged to get this seasonal influenza shot. The costs will be covered by your respective departments. Immunization clinics for the season influenza vaccination will be taking place in October. Information on dates and locations will be coming soon.

Public Guidance

People should stay informed. They should continue to take routine precautions such as:

- Washing their hands often and thoroughly
- Coughing and sneezing into their arm
- Keeping common surfaces and items clean and disinfected, and
- Staying home if they are sick (unless otherwise directed to seek medical care)

Persons at high risk of complications from influenza-like illness should seek medical attention promptly. Those at risk include pregnant women, people with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, or those with compromised immune systems.

Persons with influenza-like symptoms should stay home and minimize contact with family members as much as possible. If symptoms worsen, they should visit their physician or nurse-practitioner, a walk-in clinic, or the nearest hospital emergency department. It is recommended that such persons limit contact with other people, including other household members, until they are free of symptoms, and are feeling well.

Those experiencing influenza-like illness should consider ending self-isolation when they are able to participate fully in all of their normal daily activities.

It is important for New Brunswickers to understand that if they do not have influenza-like symptoms, it is safe to go to work and school, to participate in activities and to socialize.

Information on the virus, methods of prevention, and medical referrals, are available through New Brunswick's 24-hour H1N1flu phone line at **1-800-580-0038**. More information and tips can be found at www.gnb.ca/flu

Shared Responsibility

As was expected, cases continue to be reported here and elsewhere. We cannot be complacent or we won't be ready if the severity of the disease increases. This is why government continues to prepare:

- All government departments are fully engaged in planning and preparing for a potential pandemic.
- Government is fully committed to the business continuity process to ensure that critical services will continue to be provided in the event of a pandemic. The New Brunswick Emergency Measures Organization is co-ordinating the review and refinement of these processes with all departments.
- The departments of Health and Public Safety are contacting stakeholders especially the most vulnerable and critical infrastructure owner/operators to ensure they have the right information and are taking appropriate steps to prepare.

As New Brunswickers, we all rely on private sector companies and other organizations, and we urge them to take steps now as well to prepare.

H1N1 Vaccine

The H1N1 vaccine is in production and will be available for New Brunswickers as soon it is ready.

Federal/provincial/territorial public health officials and experts on the Public Health Network Council Vaccine Supply Task Group, the Canadian Immunization Committee, and the Public Health Agency of Canada are working together to develop a framework to provide guidance on vaccine program implementation. Guidelines are expected in the coming weeks. Decisions about program implementation for the pandemic vaccine will be based on a number of factors, including scientific evidence and ethical, legal and logistical considerations.

Several factors must be weighed when developing priority groups. These include the characteristics of the illness and the vaccine, its spread and severity among different populations, and the logistics of administering the vaccine.

Be informed. <http://www.gnb.ca/flu>
<http://intranet.gnb.ca>

Info toll-free 1 800 580 0038