

# Recommendations to Faith Groups for Preventing Respiratory Illness

The following information is from the H1N1 Flu in Ontario: A Report by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health which is available @ [www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/pro/docs/oh91100\\_report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/flu/h1n1/pro/docs/oh91100_report.pdf)

## **The H1N1 Flu – Symptoms and Characteristics**

The H1N1 flu is a respiratory illness caused by a type A influenza virus. Typical symptoms are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. In some cases, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported in people with H1N1 flu. Like seasonal flu, the H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. Spread of the H1N1 flu virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people become infected by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching their mouths or noses. Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and until symptoms have resolved. That means that people can pass on the flu to others before they realize they are sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

The following recommendations are based on the 'Individual and Community Based Measures to Help Prevent Transmission of ILI in the Community' published by Public Health Agency of Canada which can be found @ [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert/h1n1/hp-ps-info\\_health-sante-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert/h1n1/hp-ps-info_health-sante-eng.php)

## **Worship Services & Public Gatherings:**

- Provide alcohol based hand washes at the doors and encourage all to use them when entering and exiting the church – particularly children with supervision
- Encourage ill to stay at home – especially if they have a fever and cough
- Provide individual cups for communion
- Encourage bowing instead of shaking hands
- Place collection plates or baskets on long poles so ushers are only ones to touch plates
- Educate Sunday School teachers about importance of and technique for hand hygiene
- Provide handwashing signs for all bathrooms and ensure soap is available
- During peak times of respiratory illness in the community avoid large gatherings when possible in order to minimize potential exposure to the virus

**Note:** hand hygiene DVD and posters can be found on the Public Health web site @ [www.publichealthgreybreuce.on.ca](http://www.publichealthgreybreuce.on.ca), click on the H1N1 icon (top right)

### **Cleaning Practices:**

- High touch surfaces (door knobs, faucet handles, railings etc.) should be cleaned at least twice daily
- No special disinfectants are required for influenza, regular or commercially available cleaning products are sufficient for this purpose

### **Home Visitation:**

Individuals who are house bound are possibly more at risk for serious illness or complications from influenza

- Perform hand hygiene before and after visit
- Educate visitors about importance of NOT visiting if they feel unwell
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for visitors (masks, gloves, goggles, handwash)
- Educate visitors and parishioners about why they should use the PPE

### **Other Community Recommendations:**

- Implement a “flu buddy” system whereby parishioners would check on each other (especially elderly or single parents) to help ensure assistance is available if needed (e.g. grocery shopping if someone is ill and can’t get out)
- Encourage members to plan ahead and stockpile groceries and other necessary household supplies so they are prepared in the event of any emergency situation
- Encourage individuals at high risk for serious illness or complications of the flu to avoid large gatherings while influenza is circulating in the community in order to minimize potential exposure to the virus
- Consider home delivery of meals from special events/suppers to those experiencing symptoms, therefore including them without potentially infecting others

### **For more information visit:**

Grey Bruce Public Health @ [www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca](http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca)

Ministry of Health and Long Term Care @ [www.health.gov.on.ca](http://www.health.gov.on.ca)

Public Health Agency of Canada @ [www.fightflu.ca](http://www.fightflu.ca)