

## **INFLUENZA A(H1N1): GUIDELINES FOR THE INDUSTRIES**

There is global concern with the continuing spread of Influenza A (H1N1) virus in many countries such as United States, Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia etc. The occurrence of a pandemic carries a risk of potential for exposure to the flu at work and steps need to be taken to ensure the well-being of the employees. The following questions address the issues concerning workplace measures during an Influenza pandemic.

### **(A) What do I need to know about the Influenza pandemic to plan and act accordingly?**

- INFLUENZA or 'flu' can be caused by different types of influenza viruses. Influenza spreads mainly by respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing or contact with contaminated surfaces.
- PANDEMIC INFLUENZA occurs when a new strain of influenza virus emerges to which much or all of the population is susceptible. This new viral strain is efficiently transmitted from person to person and causes influenza outbreaks in many countries.
- According to the World Health Organization, the incubation period for Influenza A (H1N1) is 7 days. After being infected, persons may develop symptoms in seven days, but they may start spreading the disease one day before symptoms develop.
- The initial clinical presentation of influenza is like other types of influenza, which may include fever (> 38 C) **and** symptoms such as cough, sore throat, headache, and body ache. Other symptoms include

headache, chills, fatigue and in some cases, vomiting and diarrhoea. A history of travel to affected places and/or contact with Influenza A (H1N1) patients or related laboratory specimens.

**(B) What steps can I take to ensure maximum protection of my staff and business?**

- Communicate to employees about pandemic influenza (what it is, its impact, preventive methods, etc)
- Advise employees on preventive methods; including personal hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Refer Appendix 1.
- Remind employees of the need to wash hands frequently and to practice other good hygiene practices. Refer Appendix 2.
- Ensure a clean and hygienic work environment through regular disinfection of the office and its equipment. Refer Appendix 3.
- Support employees in adopting good personal (e.g. frequent hand washing) and environmental hygiene (e.g. proper maintenance of toilet facilities and floor drains including provision of lidded rubbish bin, regular refuse disposal and adequate supply of liquid soap, disposable towels or hand-dryers).

**Any specific advise for the employees?**

- **Request employees to report to their supervisors *promptly* if they are experiencing any flu-like symptoms. In turn, supervisors should be instructed to notify Human Resources immediately upon such a report.**
- **Advise employees with influenza symptoms to take the following actions:**

- **Relieve staff members from work if they are sick**
  - **Wear a surgical mask and seek medical attention at the nearest health facility immediately**
  - **Avoid contact with fellow employees**
  - **Accompanying person should also wear a surgical mask.** Refer appendix 4
- Keep records of staff on sick leave.
  - Take heed of travel advice and timely information about the local and global situation and control measures of various types of flu (from KKM website: <http://www.moh.gov.my/> and public announcement) for staff or business partners.

### **What are Pandemic Phase Measures ?**

- **Start screening for influenza symptoms and daily temperature checking among employees, contractors and visitors. Temperature of 38°C and above or symptoms of flu are indication of barring entry to the site.**
- **Suspected cases should be immediately referred to hospitals designated by the Ministry of Health for treatment. ( List of hospitals may be obtained from the Ministry of Health website)**
- **Routine chemoprophylaxis is not necessary.**
- **Post-exposure chemoprophylaxis not is recommended.**
- **Keep employees informed on company specific plans including a list of critical staff on site.**

## REFERENCES:

1. WHO. Swine influenza frequently asked questions. 27 April 2009  
Available at: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/faq/en/index.html>  
(Accessed 30 April 2009).
2. CDC. Questions & Answers. Key Facts about Swine Influenza (Swine Flu) 24 April 2009 Available at:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key\\_facts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key_facts.htm) (Accessed 30 April 2009).
3. KKM. National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan. 2006.
4. MOH and SOEM. Recommendations on Influenza pandemic Preparedness For Industry in Malaysia. 2006

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Precautionary measures to prevent respiratory tract infections during pandemic influenza:**

1. Good personal hygiene should be observed at all times.
2. Wash hands frequently with liquid soap, especially after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose or before preparing food.
3. Build up body immunity by practicing healthy lifestyle e.g. eating healthy food, having adequate rest, exercising regularly and avoiding smoking.
4. Cover nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing
5. Avoid visiting crowded places with poor ventilation. If you happen to be in crowded places, like shopping malls or cinemas, wear a surgical mask if somebody near you starts coughing or sneezing
7. If there is a family member who develops fever or respiratory symptoms within 7 days after returning from an affected country, all other members of the family should wear a surgical mask as a precautionary measure.
8. Consult the doctor immediately if you develop fever or any respiratory symptoms.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Guidelines for hand hygiene and disinfection**

- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after any contact with respiratory secretions
- Remove jewelry before hand wash procedure.
- Rinse hands under warm running water
- Lather with soap; cover all surfaces of the hands and fingers using friction.
- Rinse under warm running water.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a single-use towel
- Turn off faucet without recontaminating hands, e.g. use single use towel.
- Keep fingernails short and do not use fingernail polish or artificial nails.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used to decontaminate hands that are not visibly soiled
  - Apply alcohol-based hand sanitizer to palm of one hand and rub hands together, covering all surfaces of hands and finger, until hands are dry.

## APPENDIX 3

### DISINFECTION PROCEDURES

Table A. Cleaning Procedures for Common Items

Surface/Object	Procedure	Special considerations
Horizontal surfaces Such as over bed tables, work counter, baby weigh scales, cribs, mattresses, bedrails, call bells	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thorough regular cleaning</li> <li>2. Cleaning when soiled</li> <li>3. Cleaning between patients / clients and after discharge</li> </ol>	<p>Special procedures sometimes called Carbolizing are not necessary.</p> <p>Some environmental surfaces may require low lwwvl disinfection (eg., in nurseries, pediatric settings, critical care, bum units, emergency rooms, operating rooms and bone marrow transplantation facilities).</p>
Walls, blinds, curtains	Should be cleaned regularly with a detergent and as splashes/ visible soil occur.	
Floors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thorough regular cleaning</li> <li>2. Cleaning when soiled Cleaning between patients / clients and after discharge</li> </ol> <p>Damp mopping preferred</p>	<p>Detergent is adequate in most areas.</p> <p>Blood/body fluid spills should be cleaned up with disposable cloths followed by disinfections with a low level disinfectant.</p>
Carpets/upholstery	Should be vacuumed regularly and shampooed as necessary.	
Toys	Should be regularly cleaned, disinfected with a low level disinfectant, thoroughly rinsed, and dried (between patients in acute care setting).	<p>For pediatric settings, toys should be constructed of smooth, nonporous (i.e., not plush) materials to facilitate Cleaning and decontamination.</p> <p>Do not use phenolics.</p>
Toilets and commodes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Thorough regular cleaning</li> <li>2. Cleaning when soiled</li> <li>3. Cleaning between patients / clients and after discharge.</li> </ol> <p>Use a low level disinfectant</p>	These may be the source of enteric pathogens such as <i>C. Difficile</i> and <i>Shigella</i> .

**Table B. Directions for Preparing and Using Chlorine-based Disinfectants**

<b>Product</b>	<b>Intended</b>	<b>Recommended dilution</b>	<b>Level of available chlorine</b>
Household bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite solution with 50000 ppm* available chlorine)	Cleanup of blood spills	Use concentrations ranging from 1 part bleach to be mixed with 99 parts of tap water (1:100) or one part of bleach to be mixed with 9 parts of tap water (1:10), depending on the amount of organic material (e.g., blood or mucus) present on the surface to be cleaned and disinfected.	0.05% or 500 ppm 0.5% or 5000 ppm
	To add to laundry water	One part (one 8 ounce cup) Of bleach to be mixed with About 500 parts (28 Gallons) of tap water.	0.01% or 100 ppm
	Surface cleaning Soaking of glass- ware or plastic items	One part (one 8 ounce cup) to be mixed with about 50 parts (2.8 gallons) of tap water.	0.01% or 1000 ppm

\* Parts per million

+ Imperial gallon (4.5 litres)

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Guidelines on wearing surgical masks (3 Ply)**

1. If you have running nose or flu like symptoms, you are advised to stay at home. If you need to go out, make sure you wear a surgical mask.
2. Avoid crowded places. Wear a surgical mask if you cannot avoid them
3. Wash hands before wearing a surgical mask and after taking one off.
4. When wearing surgical mask, the following should be noted:
  - 4.1. The facemask should fit snugly over the face
  - 4.2. The coloured side of the mask should face outside
  - 4.3. Tie all the strings that keep the mask in place
  - 4.4. The mask should fully cover the nose, mouth as well as the chin.
  - 4.5. The metallic wire part of the mask should be fixed securely over the bridge of the nose to prevent leakage
  - 4.6. The surgical mask should not be used more than a day but if it is wet, damaged or soiled by secretions or body fluid at any time change the mask immediately.
  - 4.7. Discard all used masks into a plastic bag which should then be tied properly before disposing it into a rubbish bin.