



MARK B HORTON, MD, MSPH
Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
California Department of Public Health



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

**Interim CDPH Guidance for Public Gatherings:
Policies to Mitigate Spread of
Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infections
May 19, 2009**

Introduction

Novel influenza A (H1N1) virus (“swine influenza”) is a new virus. To date it has mainly cause mild illness; however, health officials need to take precautionary measures to limit the spread of infection until more is known about the risks of this virus. At public gatherings such as weddings, graduation ceremonies and other events where people have close contact (like handshaking and hugging) there may be increased risk for spread of novel of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus.

Objective and Scope

The objective of this document is to provide guidance on preventing the transmission of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus during public gatherings, including large public gatherings and assemblies or groupings of many people in one place. Examples of such gatherings can include college and university commencement exercises, church services, sporting events, concerts, social and cultural celebrations, weddings, conferences, and other similar activities attended by relatively large groups of people. This interim guidance does not attempt to define such events in terms of numbers of people in attendance; rather, the focus is on community situations in which crowding is likely to occur. In addition, these recommendations do not distinguish between public gatherings held indoors and those held outdoors, because differences in novel influenza A (H1N1) virus transmission patterns in these two settings are not known. Please monitor CDPH, CDC, and your local health department websites for updated recommendations regarding novel influenza A (H1N1) virus.

Current Recommendations

Decisions regarding large public gatherings during this time of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus outbreak should be made based on local influenza activity. Given the current information on disease severity and spread, CDPH recommends that:

1. Persons with influenza-like illness (ILI) (i.e., fever with either cough or sore throat) should stay home and refrain from attending any public gatherings for 7

Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations

Page 2

May 19, 2009

days after the onset of illness or at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer.

2. Persons who are at high risk of complications from novel influenza A (H1N1) virus infection (for example, persons with certain chronic medical conditions, and pregnant women) should consider their risk of exposure to novel influenza if they attend public gatherings in the community. They should consider staying away from public gatherings where the virus may be present, if they are concerned.
3. All persons should be reminded to use appropriate respiratory and hand hygiene precautions.
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or into the fold of your arm if a tissue is not available. Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
 - Wash hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after the use of tissue, coughing or sneezing. Hand lotion is recommended to moisturize hands.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread that way.
 - Keep your distance from people who are coughing. If possible, stay about 6 feet away.
 - Avoid shaking hands with others by bumping elbows or some other way of greeting.
 - Avoid sharing personal items such as eating/drinking utensils, toothbrushes, and towels, especially with ill persons.
4. Based on currently available information, masks and respirators are recommended for healthcare settings where frequent exposures to persons with novel influenza A (H1N1) virus are likely. If symptomatic persons cannot stay home during the acute phase of their illness, consideration should be given to wearing a mask in public places when they may have close contact with other persons. If persons at increased risk of complications from influenza decide to wear masks during periods of increased respiratory illness activity in the community, they may need to wear them any time they are in a public place and when they are around other household members to be protected.
5. To repeat, people with the flu should stay home until they are asymptomatic (usually 7 days). School, prison and health care facility authorities should set up screening processes to exclude ill persons with flu-like symptoms.

Event organizers should consider communicating to attendees about the need to remain home if ill and to use good hygiene practices while at the event. Such information may

Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations

Page 3

May 19, 2009

be communicated through a variety of means such as letters, newspaper notices, public service announcements, Web site postings, and text messages.

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx>

Additional Recommendations

Other measures can be used by event organizers to help reduce the risk for household novel influenza A (H1N1) virus infection.

- Provide tissues, hand washing facilities with soap and running water, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer at events.
- Provide options such as remote Web-based viewing sites, teleconferencing that reduce the need for public gatherings.

These recommendations are subject to change as more information about novel influenza A (H1N1) virus becomes available.