



# Influenza A(H1N1)

## Advice for Travellers

8 May 2009

Human cases of Influenza A(H1N1) have been reported in many countries. This is an evolving situation and it is likely that more countries will be affected.

### What is Influenza A(H1N1)?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has described this virus as a new subtype of Influenza A(H1N1) not previously detected in pigs or humans.

Symptoms of Influenza A(H1N1) are similar to those of seasonal flu, usually a **feverish illness accompanied by cough, sore throat, headache and muscle aches. Some people have vomiting and diarrhoea.** For most people, this illness appears to be mild. Infection with this flu is treatable with the antiviral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®).

### What should I do if I have returned from a country affected by Influenza A(H1N1) ?

If you have visited an affected area, it is important that you are vigilant for any signs of illness in the seven days after you return from the affected area.

As long as you remain well, there is no need for you to isolate yourself from other people.

### What happens if I become unwell?

If you have returned from one of the areas that have been affected and you start to develop influenza-like symptoms you are advised to:

1. Stay at home to avoid spreading infection to others
2. Contact your GP / family doctor by telephone to explain the situation or phone the **HSE Information helpline 1850 24 1850**
3. Your doctor will decide if you need testing or treatment.

If you become ill while travelling, it is important that you avoid contact with other people as much as possible. Make yourself known to staff and where possible maintain a distance from other passengers.

If you have symptoms of flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with disposable tissues when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing your nose. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Dispose of used tissues in the nearest waste bin.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, and especially after coughing and sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners (with at least 60% alcohol) are also effective.

## What happens if my doctor thinks I might have Influenza A(H1N1) ?

- All suspected cases will be investigated
- The need for antiviral treatment will be assessed
- While most cases under investigation will be well enough to remain at home, some may need to be admitted to hospital.
- It will be important for you to avoid contact with other people as much as possible until the results of your tests are back.
- The people you live with will be advised to monitor their health and to follow the advice given.
- The most important thing you can do to avoid spreading the illness to other people is to follow the standard respiratory and hand hygiene advice described in this leaflet

## What should I do if I am travelling to an area affected by Influenza A(H1N1) ?

During your visit to the affected area:

### a) Limit exposure to flu illness

- Avoid close contact with people who have symptoms such as fever, sneezing, coughing or shivering
- Pay close attention to the health messages being broadcast in the country in which you are travelling and follow local public health guidelines
- As with all infectious diseases it is important to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
  - Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, or alcohol based hand cleaners (with at least 60% alcohol)
  - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and put your used tissue in a waste bin.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread that way
  - If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands

b) Seek medical care if you feel sick. Do not travel if you are sick.

Further information is available on Health Protection Surveillance Centre website [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)