



North Bay Parry Sound District  
**Health Unit**

# E-News

from Acting Medical Officer of Health

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## Links to H1N1 Updates

### **Health Unit H1N1 Information Page**

*North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit*

### **H1N1 Updates**

*Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care*

### **[www.fightflu.ca](http://www.fightflu.ca)**

*Information on Flu from Public Health Agency of Canada*

### **Pandemic H1N1 Updates**

*World Health Organization*

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This newsletter provides a quick update on key H1N1 issues and links to more information. Feel free to pass this on to others who may be interested. For questions or comments, just click this [link](#).

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## H1N1 Update

Influenza activity is decreasing, but is still above normal for this time of year. This is partly due to the fact that H1N1 testing is done only on those who are hospitalized.

As of Aug. 28, 2009, there have been 23 deaths in Ontario as a result of pH1N1. Normally, the death rate for seasonal influenza is 33 per one million population. Our current death rate is only 1.8 per 1 million population for pH1N1, far below the seasonal rate; therefore pH1N1 is categorized as mild in severity.

The Southern Hemisphere is just finishing their regular flu season where they saw pH1N1 as their predominant flu virus strain. The level of severity was mild to moderate, just slightly above their normal seasonal influenza activity. The pH1N1 virus did not change significantly from a genetic perspective.

Many believe that we will experience a flu season in the fall and winter months similar to the Southern Hemisphere.

We do not know how H1N1 will affect our community in the coming year, but we can prepare for it. The best way to prevent influenza is to wash your hands, sneeze and cough into your sleeve, clean commonly touched surfaces and stay home when sick.

The symptoms of H1N1 are very similar to seasonal influenza. The most common symptoms are fever, cough and sore throat. However, complications may arise such as pneumonia, hospitalization and even death. Those at most risk from complications have underlying medical conditions such as asthma and other chronic lung diseases, obesity, diabetes or heart disease. Complications from H1N1 can also affect pregnant women and young children.

Working with our health partners and municipalities, we are preparing for the Pandemic H1N1 this fall. This includes:

- Planning H1N1 vaccination clinics in addition to setting up seasonal influenza vaccination clinics

- Meeting regularly with our Community Emergency Management Committees to provide current information and resources, and preparing to implement flu assessment centres, should they be required.
- Working with school boards to provide information and resources about H1N1 influenza
- Keeping in constant contact with provincial and federal governments to provide local data and ensure we have the most current information on H1N1
- Developing local communication campaigns to enhance provincial and national media campaigns
- Meeting with area health professionals to plan for a more active influenza season

We can't predict what is going to happen this fall, but we can prepare. And we have.

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## Pandemic H1N1 Vaccine Update

The Public Health Agency of Canada has ordered 50.4 million doses of H1N1 vaccine of which 19.5 million doses are for Ontario. This will cover two doses of vaccine for 75% of the province. Clinical trials have begun and, if all goes well, H1N1 immunization programs may begin by December, if deemed necessary.

It is likely that people will need two doses of H1N1 vaccine to provide a good level of immunity, although some age groups or target groups may be protected with one dose. Clinical trials will analyze the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Given that supplies may be limited at the outset, a process is underway to determine which priority groups will receive the first H1N1 vaccine. These priority groups will be determined by mid-September. Priority groups may include:

- Health care workers
- Children 6 to 23 months of age
- Individuals under the age of 65 with pre-existing medical conditions
- Pregnant women
- Persons living in remote and isolated areas, such as First Nations communities.

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## Flu Assessment Centres

The Health Unit has been busy planning Flu Assessment Centres, with the support of many partners. Local hospitals, Community Emergency Management Committees, municipalities, the Ontario Provincial Police, Community Care Access Centre, as well as local community agencies are working with the Health Unit to support the implementation of these Centres.

While we hope we do not need Flu Assessment Centres, we are prepared to open them if necessary.

[Links to Business  
Continuity Planning](#)

[First Steps to Business  
Continuity Planning](#)  
*Peel Health*

[Pandemic Resources  
for Employers](#)  
*Ontario Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care*

[What you should know  
about a flu pandemic](#)  
*Ontario Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care*

Contact Us

[www.healthunit.biz](http://www.healthunit.biz)

[contact@healthunit.biz](mailto:contact@healthunit.biz)

The purpose of the Flu Assessment Centres is to provide an additional location to help assess and treat patients with influenza in the event that hospitals and physicians become overwhelmed during the influenza season due to H1N1. This will be important if Antivirals are used, since these must be started within 48 hours of developing symptoms to be effective.

Five Flu Assessment Centres are planned for our district and will be located in North Bay, Sturgeon Falls, Mattawa, Sundridge and Parry Sound. If the centres open, they will be open seven days a week.

The partners have been organizing staffing, volunteers, supplies, and procedures to support the centres. The community will be informed of the opening, times and locations through a communication campaign. This includes ads and announcements on radio, in newspapers, on municipal and health unit websites, and by flyers throughout the community.

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## Business Continuity Planning is Key

We are expecting the H1N1 influenza virus to spread even more this fall. Having a business continuity plan in place will help workplaces reduce disruptions due to increased absenteeism.

You may have disruptions with higher than usual absentee rates due to employees who are ill, or employees looking after family members who are ill. A Business Continuity Plan will identify your organization's key functions, the staff required to keep those functions running, a list of key skill sets needed and a communication protocol to ensure your staff, clients and stakeholders are informed.

To develop or revise your plan, here are some websites with information and tools to help. Just click on the title and it will take you there.

[Health Unit information about H1N1 influenza](#)

[First Steps to Business Continuity Planning](#)

[Government of Ontario: What you should know about a pandemic](#)

[Government of Ontario - Pandemic information for Employers](#)

For more information on the H1N1 situation in our area, visit the Health Unit website at [healthunit.biz](http://healthunit.biz) or call us at 705-474-1400, or toll-free at 1-800-563-2808.

Dr. Jim Chirico,  
Acting Medical Officer of Health