

## Ministry of Public Health

### Public Health Advice No. 4 Subject: Outbreaks of Influenza A(H1N1)

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At present the outbreak of influenza A(H1N1) is ongoing and several cases of the illness have been reported in Asia. According to the World Health Organization, as of 10 May 2009, 3,440 human cases of influenza A(H1N1) in 29 countries, including 48 deaths (45 in Mexico, 2 in the United States, and 1 in Canada), were reported.

The Ministry of Public Health has been strengthening the medical and public health system to cope with various emerging infectious diseases. To prevent and control the outbreak of influenza A(H1N1), the ministry has been implementing three main strategies: (1) **prevention of disease introduction** – all the international disease control checkpoints have taken actions to prevent the introduction of the new virus into the country; (2) **detection, containment and mitigation**– actions being undertaken include rapid detection, efficient diagnoses and treatment for influenza A(H1N1) patients at all healthcare facilities across the nation, accelerating the function of surveillance and rapid response teams in all districts, and training all village health volunteers (VHVs) to assist disease surveillance at the village level and give advice on disease prevention to villagers; (3) **general preparedness**–health education and public relations measures have been employed to educate the public about illness prevention.

As it is now close to the opening of the new academic semester, the Ministry of Public Health takes this opportunity to provide additional advice to the general public, travellers and educational institutions as follows:

#### Advice for the general public

People should be confident with the measures put in place and strictly follow the Ministry of Public Health's advice which underlines: maintaining good health by taking an adequate rest, regularly taking exercise, eating nutritious food – vegetables and fruit in particular; fostering health habits for disease prevention – such as eating freshly cooked food, using serving spoons, and washing hands often. Moreover, in case a person has influenza-like symptoms (fever, cough, runny nose, phlegm, etc.), he/she is advised to cover his/her mouth and nose with a handkerchief or tissue paper when coughing or sneezing and dispose of it into a garbage bin. Also, he/she is advised to wear a face mask when being with other people.

If an acquaintance has fever within seven days after returning from a foreign country, he/she is advised to see a doctor for proper medical treatment immediately.

#### Advice for travellers returning from areas with on-going outbreaks

- In case one has fever on board, he/she is advised to notify airline staff or flight attendants to be properly taken care of, to ensure the safety of other passengers at the airport and on board.
- Thailand is screening airline passengers for the illness with thermo scanners on arrival at all international airports. In case a passenger with fever is detected, he/she will be examined and taken care of by a physician at the checkpoint according to the guidelines given by the Ministry of Public Health.
- Passengers who do not have fever or illness are advised to observe their own symptoms for seven days.

- While observing one's symptoms, if he/she has fever together with any of the following symptoms: cough, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhoea, he/she should avoid close contact with other people, and wear a mask or cover his/her mouth and nose with tissue paper when coughing or sneezing. Also, he/she is advised to often wash one's hands with water and soap or rub them with alcohol gel. He/she is strongly advised to see a doctor and show the health beware card given by quarantine authorities at the airport, for thorough examination.
- If one is not hospitalized, he/she is advised to suspend work or classes, stay at his/her residence, and observe his/her own symptoms for seven days after arrival.
- One is advised to cover his/her mouth and nose with tissue paper when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the paper into a garbage bin. Also, he/she is advised to wear a face mask while being with other people.

#### **Advice for educational institutions**

- All educational institutions have been requested to check whether any of their students have just returned from an area with on-going influenza A(H1N1) outbreak and communicate with the students as well as their guardians to advise disease prevention. The students are to observe their own symptoms for seven days after arrival to Thailand. In case such students have fever together with respiratory symptoms such as sore throat, cough, runny nose, etc., they are strongly advised to see a doctor for examination, diagnosis and treatment, and suspend studying until they get well.
- Teachers of classes are requested to check the number of students who are absent from class each day. In case there are students with influenza-like symptoms or an unusual number of absent students (three students or more in one classroom), find out the cause of such an illness or absenteeism. If the absent students are suspected of getting sick with influenza, this should be notified to local public health authorities (in Bangkok, call 0 2246 0358 or 0 2245 8106; outside Bangkok, call the Provincial Public Health Office) for case investigation and timely disease control actions.
- Educational institutions are requested to provide facilities for hand washing such as wash basins, soap, etc. for students as well as conduct campaigns for promotion of hand washing. In the beginning, the Ministry of Public Health will distribute some face masks to educational institutions. The face masks are available at each institution's first aid room for sick students for prevention of disease spread.

For more information, please visit the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)'s website: [www.moph.go.th](http://www.moph.go.th), and for questions, call the Department of Disease Control's Operations Centre at 0 2590 3333 or MOPH's Hotline Centre at 0 2590 1994 around the clock.

Ministry of Public Health, Thailand  
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