



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL
HYGIENE
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Guidance for Preventing Transmission of Influenza for Non-Health-Care Workers Making Home Visits

November 2, 2009

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This guidance is for non-health-care workers, including social service providers, interviewers, case managers, and inspectors, who make home visits and may encounter clients with influenza-like illness (ILI). This guidance can help reduce the spread of both seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza, protect people most at risk for severe influenza, and preserve normal activities with the least possible disruption.

These recommendations apply only when influenza viruses are circulating in New York City. The New York City Health Department provides this guidance based on the best current information. Recommendations may change, and New York City recommendations may sometimes differ from those issued by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Visit www.nyc.gov/flu for frequently updated information.

This guidance is not intended for health care workers who provide direct patient services. Home health care workers who make home visits and provide services that involve direct contact with clients with influenza-like symptoms should follow infection control measures for health care professionals available at www.cdc.gov.

Transmission of influenza

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness that spreads mainly through droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Influenza usually spreads from person to person. It is also possible to become infected by touching a virus-contaminated surface (such as a doorknob or phone), then touching the eye, nose, or mouth. Influenza-like illness is defined as a fever of 100°F or higher with a cough or sore throat.

The best ways to prevent the spread of seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza are:

- Vaccination (see www.nyc.gov/flu for vaccination recommendations and places to get vaccinated)
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve—not a hand
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Avoiding close contact with people who have ILI illness
- For workers with ILI, staying home until the worker is fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medications (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen)

Visiting the home of a client with influenza-like illness

Workers who perform interviews, inspections, and other non-patient services in homes may encounter a client or other family members with ILI illness. Follow these steps to help protect the worker from exposure to influenza:

- **Maintain a distance of at least 3 feet from the client or ill family member.**
The visit can proceed normally if close contact can be avoided.
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after each visit, and during the visit when appropriate.
- **If close contact with the client cannot be avoided:**
 - When possible, consider rescheduling non-urgent appointments until at least 24 hours after the client's fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medications
- **If rescheduling is not an option and close contact cannot be avoided**, the worker should:
 - Wear a face mask during the visit
 - Ask the client to wear a face mask during the visit
 - Wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after each visit, and during the visit when appropriate

Reducing risk for severe illness

People who have underlying health conditions are more at risk for severe illness with influenza.

- Workers with underlying health conditions should get vaccinated against seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza
- Workers with ILI and an underlying medical condition (see below for conditions), should call their health care provider to get early treatment
- Workers with underlying medical conditions who have a breach in the recommendations described above while in close contact with clients with ILI should call their health care provider to discuss preventative medication

Risks for severe illness include:

- Age 65 years or older
- Pregnant women and women who have had a child, a miscarriage, or an abortion in the previous 2 weeks
- Lung disease, such as asthma or emphysema
- Heart, kidney, or liver disease, except hypertension
- Blood disease, such as sickle cell anemia
- Diabetes or other metabolic disorders
- Weakened immune system (cause by HIV, cancer, or medication)
- Seizure, spinal cord injury, neuromuscular disorder, cognitive dysfunction, and other disorders that may cause breathing problems
- Long-term aspirin therapy in children 18 and younger

5. Other Resources

- Clients of agencies performing home visits can provide their clients with copies [Home Isolation Instructions](#) .
- Other workers and employers should refer to [Guidance for Preventing Transmission of Influenza in the Workplace](#) for general workplace recommendations.

- For more general information on vaccinations, please visit [Health Bulletin: Prevent Influenza - Get Vaccinated!](#)