

FAQs

VANOC Pandemic Preparedness



1. What is H1N1?

H1N1 — also known as human swine influenza (or swine flu) — is a respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat and lungs. H1N1 has caused primarily mild illness in Canada, but Canadians need to be prepared to respond to a potentially more severe form of the virus this fall.

2. How does it differ from seasonal flu?

Surveillance of the spread of H1N1 shows that it is affecting more young and healthy people than regular seasonal flu, which normally affects seniors and young children. People with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women may be at greater risk of severe illness from H1N1.

3. How is the H1N1 virus spread?

H1N1 is contagious and is spread the same way as seasonal flu. This happens when an infected person coughs or sneezes and their germs enter the nose, eyes or throat of another person. The germs can also survive for up to 48 hours on hard surfaces such as counters and doorknobs, and can be picked up on hands and transmitted to the respiratory system by touching the mouth and nose or rubbing the eyes.

4. What can I do to reduce my chances of getting infected or improve my chances of a speedy recovery?

Get plenty of sleep, eat nutritious foods such fruits and vegetables, and maintain good personal hygiene habits by washing your hands frequently with soap and water, and coughing or sneezing into your sleeve. These are all simple things you can do to reduce your chances of catching the flu and improve your chances of a speedy recovery. Also, be sure to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

5. Does it cost anything to get vaccinated?

The H1N1 vaccine is free for all Canadians who want or need it. The seasonal flu vaccine will be available free for all Games volunteers in British Columbia. Games volunteers will need to show proof that they are Games volunteers (for example, by showing an offer letter).

6. Should I also get vaccinated against the seasonal flu?

H1N1 vaccine and seasonal flu vaccine can be given at the same time, in separate arms. We strongly recommend all VANOC workforce members receive both vaccines at the same time.

7. Where should I go to get vaccinated?

The H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines are being administered through community clinics (see flu clinic locator at immunizebc.ca) and family physician offices. For volunteers living outside British Columbia (BC), we recommend that they receive both vaccines at least 14 days before their arrival in BC.



8. Is it mandatory for workforce members to get vaccinated?

VANOC is committed to creating a safe and healthy Games environment that will provide an extraordinary experience for athletes, volunteers and Games participants. We strongly recommend all workforce members get vaccinated against H1N1 and the seasonal flu as soon as the vaccines are available to them.

9. What are the symptoms of H1N1?

H1N1 symptoms are similar to those of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache chills and fatigue. Some people have also experienced diarrhea and vomiting.

10. When should I seek medical attention?

If you are experiencing flu-like symptoms, stay home and avoid contact with other people. You should seek medical attention if you experience the following symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing and shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

11. What is VANOC doing to prevent workforce from getting infected?

VANOC is working in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) to plan a number of strategies to address and prevent any outbreak of H1N1 prior to and during the Games.

12. How are we preventing visitors and athletes from bringing the H1N1 virus into the country?

We cannot restrict any person from entering Canada, but we are providing communications to client groups who will be coming to Canada for the Games. We strongly recommend that any visitors receive H1N1 vaccines at least 14 days prior to their arrival in Canada, and together with VCH, we will be implementing a range of public health measures, including messaging.

13. What is VANOC doing to prevent an outbreak during the Games?

We are working closely with a number of partners to deliver medical services at the Games; VCH is the lead agency on all matters related to public health.

14. How serious is the H1N1 flu infection?

Like the seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity, from mild to severe.

15. Can we expect travel restrictions into Canada during the Games?

No. The World Health Organization declared a pandemic in June 2009, but has stated that travel restrictions are unnecessary.

16. Where can I get more information?

More information about H1N1 can be found at:

www.vch.ca

www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/index.html