

## H1N1 (SWINE FLU) UPDATE June 25, 2009

Last week, a 20 year old woman suddenly became ill with the H1N1 (swine flu) virus and passed away at a local hospital. Some people may wonder if the H1N1 virus has become stronger and if they should worry about getting the virus. Our experts tell us that the H1N1 virus has not become more virulent (stronger). There may be a reason that is unknown to us, that made this woman less able to fight off this virus. The H1N1 virus has not shown us that it is more virulent than the seasonal flu we see every winter. Like the seasonal flu, the H1N1 virus causes an illness that often includes coughing, sore throat, runny nose, fever and chills. The H1N1 and seasonal flu infected person is usually quite ill for at least 5 days and usually feels better in 2-3 weeks.

Worrying is common in these times and most people feel that they worry less if they are empowered to prevent the flu. As a community, we can work together to prevent the transmission of the flu virus and prevent ourselves from becoming ill. Here's what you can do to prevent the flu:

1. **Keep your body healthy** by remembering that your immune system works best when you have adequate rest, are eating a balanced nourishing diet, sleeping well (at least 6-7 hours a night) and keeping your stress level low. Adequate levels of vitamin C are important for a healthy immune system. If your immune system works well, then you are less likely to become severely ill. Your immune system is responsible for fighting off any infections that you come in contact with.
2. **Protect yourself from the flu virus** by keeping your hands clean and away from your face. Many people give themselves the flu virus by touching their eyes, nose or mouth while their hands are contaminated with the flu virus. Washing your hands with warm soapy water (for the length of time it takes to sing the happy birthday song) or cleaning your hands with a hand sanitizer works best. Hand sanitizer dispensers are provided throughout the campus.
3. **Seek medical attention** when you are ill with a fever greater than 100 degrees (F) AND have a cough or sore throat. Seeking medical attention means calling Student Health Services or your medical provider for advice and, if needed, getting a checkup. At Mesa Student Health, students can obtain a free check up including a simple nasal swab test to detect the flu. The flu test is free for students/faculty/staff. Only people with the symptoms above will be tested. All Mesa College students/faculty/staff are encouraged to report their symptoms, noted above, to Student Health so that we can test you, if needed. We are very interested in keeping an eye on the number of flu related illnesses at our college.
4. **Cover your cough and sneeze** to prevent the airborne transmission of the flu virus. Remember that if you have the H1N1 virus you are contagious the day before your symptoms begin. This means that you can spread the virus when you cough or sneeze even when you don't feel sick. If you do become ill, please stay home so that we have less of a chance of others getting sick too.

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