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## FACTSHEET

May 14, 2009

Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport  
Ministry of Health Services

### DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT THE H1N1 FLU VIRUS

- 1) **Someone coughed on me in the line up at the grocery store. Can I get the H1N1 flu virus?**
  - This is the time of year for coughs and sneezes and not just the H1N1 flu virus.
  - The likelihood is extremely low and it is unlikely the person had H1N1 flu as B.C. still has a relatively low count of confirmed cases.
  - Make sure to wash your hands often. Alcohol based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- 2) **My friends just came back from Mexico. Can our children go over to their house to play?**
  - You don't need to have gone to Mexico to get the H1N1 flu virus.
  - Use your common sense – it doesn't matter where people have been. If they are sick, then they should limit contact with people who are not sick.
- 3) **I was on a plane with someone who I think may have had the H1N1 flu virus – am I infected?**
  - The H1N1 flu virus, like all flu viruses, is spread through droplets, but just being in a plane doesn't mean you have the H1N1 flu virus.
  - Know the symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus – cough, fever, headache, general aches and fatigue – and call [HealthLink BC](#) at 8-1-1 for more help.
- 4) **I think I was exposed to the H1N1 flu virus, do I need to get Tamiflu?**
  - A doctor will determine whether symptoms are indicative of the human swine influenza and whether anti-viral medication is needed. If the doctor determines medication is needed, he or she will give you a prescription for it.
- 5) **If I'm a caregiver treating someone with influenza, should I wear a mask?**
  - Caregivers who are treating someone with the flu (seasonal or H1N1) and patients who have the flu and are being cared for would both benefit from wearing a mask, especially if the patient has a chronic underlying medical condition.
  - If you are treating someone with the flu, the wearing of masks by affected persons will limit their ability to spread virus.
- 6) **Should regular members of the public be wearing masks?**
  - No. In fact, for the general public, the benefits of wearing a mask remain unproven.
  - The best thing is to do is to cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze and wash your hands often with soap and water. It's the simplest and most effective way to prevent spreading the virus.
- 7) **Can you get the H1N1 flu virus from eating pork or pork products?**
  - Proper cooking of pork products would kill any viruses. Additionally, swine exhibiting symptoms of influenza would not pass tests to enter into the food market.

**8) My child came home from school saying things are much worse than health officials say they are – what can I believe?**

- While the situation is evolving and more cases are expected to be confirmed in the coming days and weeks, public health officials have been clear that, presently, this H1N1 flu virus looks more and more like seasonal flu.
- Get the latest facts at [www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu](http://www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu)

You can call [HealthLink BC](#) at **8-1-1**, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or if feeling ill.