



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

# NEWSLETTER

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## Information on “swine flu” prevention for B.C. health care workers

Many health care workers in British Columbia are concerned about the recent outbreak of Human Swine Influenza A (H1N1) and their potential on-the-job exposure to it.

Health employers, WorkSafeBC, the B.C. Centre for Disease Control and the Occupational Health and Safety Agency for Healthcare (OHSAC) are monitoring the situation closely to limit exposure to British Columbians.

Here's what you need to know.

“Swine flu” symptoms include fever, fatigue, cough, headache, general body aches, and may be accompanied by a runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Under the *Occupational Health & Safety Regulation* – parts 5.54 (Exposure Control Plan) and 6.33 to 6.40 (Biological Agents) – your employer is required to do a risk assessment of all jobs that have any potential contact with biological agents, and to have an exposure control plan in place.

For HEU members with direct patient/resident contact, there are several precautions to help reduce the risks, such as thorough handwashing with soap and hot water, using hand sanitizers, avoid excessively touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and if you're sick, stay home and limit contact with others.

In B.C., employers are legally obligated to protect employees from work-related hazards, including exposure to infectious diseases like influenza, and must provide personal protective equipment (PPE) – gloves, gowns, goggles and face masks.

If you're within two metres (six feet) of suspected “swine flu” cases, you need to be provided with a fit-tested N95 respirator mask and training on PPE procedures. This ensures that the respirator fits snugly and seals the face properly to provide the necessary protection from airborne particles.

Contact your nurse clinician, infection control nurse, occupational health and safety committee or your direct supervisor for clarification on safety measures.

If you believe you are not properly protected, contact your shop steward or servicing representative. You have the right to refuse unsafe work (part 3.12, *OH&S Regulation*).

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In response to the “swine flu” crisis, OHSAH has posted information for health care workers on their website, with regular updates.

*Additional information can be found at:*

- B.C. Centre for Disease Control: <[www.bccdc.org](http://www.bccdc.org)>
- Health Canada: <<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/>>
- WorkSafeBC:  
<[http://www.worksafebc.com/news\\_room/features/2009/new\\_042909.asp](http://www.worksafebc.com/news_room/features/2009/new_042909.asp)>
- OHSAH: < <http://www.ohsah.bc.ca/>>
- Public Health Agency of Canada: <[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine\\_200904-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine_200904-eng.php)>
- World Health Organization: <[www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html)>
- WorkSafeBC’s prevention information line: 604-276-3100 in the Lower Mainland, or toll-free 1-888-621-7233.

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