

MSHA Safety Talks: H1N1 Flu (Week of August 24, 2009)

There's been just enough news about the H1N1 flu this summer to remind you that it hasn't gone away. People are getting sick everywhere from Texas to Maine and California. The news reminds us that this flu has not gone away and probably won't go away without our hearing a lot more about it.

On June 11, the World Health Organization, the health arm of the United Nations, raised the pandemic alert level from Phase 5 to Phase 6, meaning the spread of the flu has reach a more serious stage. The pandemic we've been told about is underway.

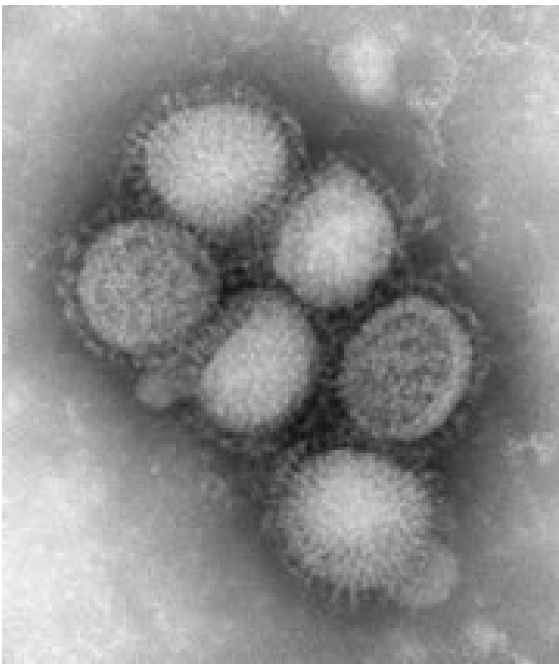


Image of H1N1 influenza virus taken in the CDC Influenza Laboratory

As of August 21, the CDC reported that H1N1 virus has hospitalized 7983 people in the United States and caused 522 deaths. Vaccines are being developed and there is hope of

reducing the impact of the flu through good public health measures.

Because of the potential disruption to our family and work lives by H1N1, we are going to be spending the next few weeks giving you information about this flu in the hope it will help you adjust to some of the changes that may take place this coming flu season.

The CDC is now recommending that people with influenza-like illness stay at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F), or free of signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. **The CDC changed this** from its previous recommendation that sick people stay home for 7 days after illness onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever was longer.

The new recommendation applies to camps, schools, businesses, mass gatherings, and other community settings where the majority of people are not at increased risk for influenza complications. This guidance does not apply to health care settings where the exclusion period should be continued for 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.

More next week.