

## FACTS SHEET – INFLUENZA A (H1N1)

- **What is influenza – A(H1N1)**

Influenza – A (H1N1) (earlier know as swine flu) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. First detected in Mexico in April, 2009, it has spread to many countries in the World. Swine flu is basically a misnomer. This was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to those found in pigs in North America. Further on, it has been found that this new virus has gene segments from the swine, avian and human flu virus genes. The scientists calls this a ‘quadruple reassortant’ virus and hence this new (novel) virus is christened “influenza-A (H1N1) virus.”

- **Influenza A(H1N1) outbreak**

It is causing an epidemic among humans in Mexico and it has spread to over 70 countries, including India.

- **Is it safe to take pork items?**

Pigs have nothing to do with this disease. Pork products are safe if properly cooked. There is no need to cull pigs. Do not panic if some pigs die in the community which may be due to some other diseases.

- **Is this flu virus contagious?**

Influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious. It spreads from human to human through direct contact and/ or as airborne infection.

- **What are the signs and symptoms of influenza-A (H1N1) in people?**

The symptoms of swine flu are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

- **How can someone with the flu infect someone else?**

When someone infected with H1N1 coughs or sneezes the virus go flying in the air carried by droplet nuclei as far as 6 feet. During respiration if healthy people happen to inhale these droplets nuclei the virus get deposited inside their nostrils or lungs.

Similarly when we shake hands with infected patients or our hands come in contact with contaminated objects or surfaces and then touch our eyes, nose or mouth the virus get deposited at these sites. Soon after the virus settle down at these sites they start multiplying and subsequently the infected person manifests symptoms of flu.

The infected persons in turn through direct contact or cough/ sneeze spread the virus to others in a fashion of chain reaction.

- **How to keep away from getting the flu?**

First and most important method: Promptly cover mouth and nose with handkerchief or tissue paper while coughing or sneezing, stay at least an arm's length from persons coughing or sneezing, avoid gatherings. Wash your hands frequently. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

- **Are there medicines to treat this flu?**

Yes. Adequate stocks of medicines are made available. The Government has in the designated hospitals stored medicines if required. It is strongly advisable not to take medicines on your own.

- **What can I do to stop spread of H1N1?**

- (a) Cover your nose and mouth with a handkerchief or tissues when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissues in the trash after you use it.
- (b) Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- (c) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- (d) Try to avoid close contact with people having flu like illness.
- (e) If one gets sick with influenza, one must stay at home, away from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. However, if one is having any respiratory distress, one should report to a nearby hospital.

- **What steps Government of Sikkim taking to prevent outbreak of H1N1 in the state?**

1. At a high level meeting chaired by the Hon'ble Health Minister recently put the state on alertness in reference to the pandemic of Influenza A (H1N1). He took stock of the situation and directed all concerned to remain prepared to deal with situations that may arise out of the pandemic Influenza A (H1N1).

2. *State H1N1 Monitoring Task Force* consisting of various experts in the field has been constituted to expand the *Rapid Response Team* that was already in place.
3. The Government has launched a mass media campaign to inform and educate people on **Dos & Don'ts**.
4. Sharing information with public through various media activities.
5. Setting up of *Screening Centres* at state entry points
6. *Screening & Isolation Centres* at STNM Hospital, District Hospitals, some PHCs, and CRH-Manipal. Tadong
7. Making available of *Tamiflu/ Fluvir*, Personal protection Equipments (PPE), other supportive medicines and equipments
8. Organizing visits of experts to the state from various centres
9. Massive training programmes for doctors and paramedical staffs

#### **IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS:**

**Dr Y D Chankapa: State Nodal Officer: (0)98320 79576; (03592) 204199 (O)**

Help Line (STNM Hospital, Gangtok Sikkim): **7944**

Outbreak Monitoring Cell (Control Room, NICD): 011-23921401

Important Websites:

[www.mohfw.nic.in](http://www.mohfw.nic.in); [www.nicd.nic.in](http://www.nicd.nic.in)