

DevPulse

NEDA Development Advocacy Factsheet

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What We Should Know About Influenza A (H1N1)

Influenza A (H1N1) is an illness that may lead to death if not treated early according to the Department of Health (DOH). It is caused by a novel virus that resulted from the reassortment of four viruses from pigs, humans and birds. The virus was first detected in April 2009 in the United States. It spreads from person-to-person, the same way regular seasonal influenza viruses do.

As of May 30, 2009, 10 people were reported to be infected with the Influenza A (H1N1) virus in the Philippines according to DOH. Despite this, DOH Secretary Francisco Duque said there is no reason for the public to panic and that the government is still on top of the situation.

affected at this stage, the declaration of Phase 5 is a strong signal that a pandemic is imminent and that the time to finalize the organization, communication, and implementation of the planned mitigation measures is short.

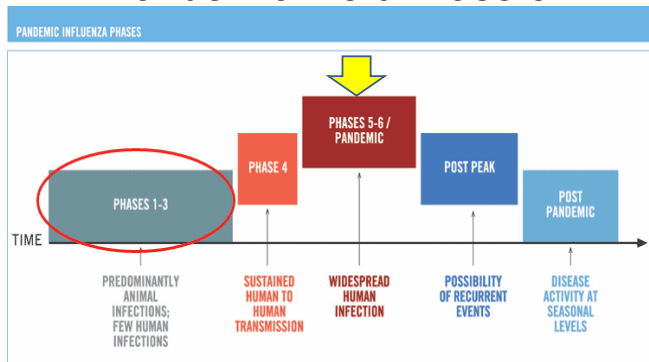
In its latest update, WHO said the virus has spread to 46 countries with 12,954 laboratory confirmed cases. Ninety two of the 12,954 people have died of the disease – 80 in Mexico, 10 in the US, and one each in Canada and Costa Rica and the number is increasing.

Mode of Transmission and Symptoms

The virus can be transmitted through exposure to droplets from coughs and sneezes of an infected person as well as by touching mouth, nose or eyes after getting contact with contaminated objects or an infected person.

Symptoms are similar with that of a regular flu such as: fever, headache, fatigue, lack of appetite, muscle or joint pains, runny nose, sore throat and cough. In some cases, symptoms also include diarrhea, nausea or vomiting.

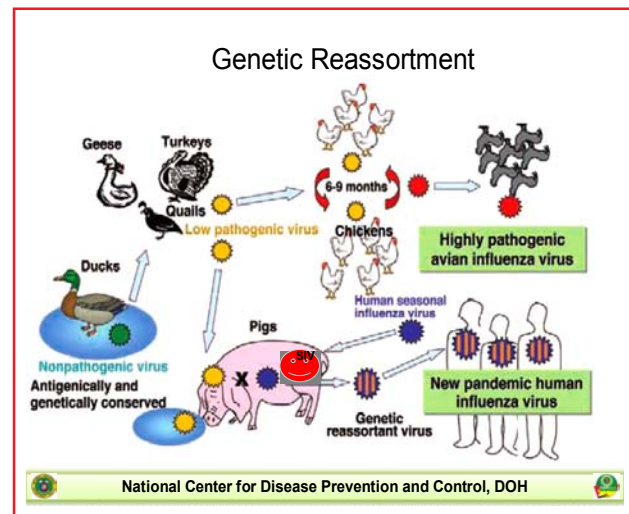
Pandemic Alert Phase 5



WHO Update

Influenza A (H1N1) is a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) according to World Health Organization (WHO). This means there is serious public health impact; it is unusual or unexpected; the disease spreads internationally; and it interferes with international travel or trade.

That's why WHO has raised the pandemic alert level to Phase 5. This phase is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus in at least two countries in one WHO region. While most countries will not be



How To Prevent It

Prevention is better than cure as they say. According to DOH, to avoid contacting Influenza A (H1N1): (a) cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing; (b) wash hands with soap and water; (c) use alcohol-based hand sanitizers; (d) increase body's resistance by having at least eight hours of sleep, exercising, drinking plenty of fluids, eating nutritious food; and (e) learn how to manage stress.

If you suspect that another person is sick with the virus, you should: (a) protect yourself by using face mask; (b) ask the person to use a face mask; (c) keep a distance of one meter away from the person; (d) request the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHERTS) or any local health officer to transport the patient to a DOH-referral hospital.

If you are a frequent traveler, you should also avoid close contact with a sick person, wear surgical mask and strictly follow the health authority's advise.

According to DOH, Influenza A (H1N1) is not transmitted through food. However, pork should be thoroughly cooked at a temperature of 70°C (160°F).

How to Treat It

The virus can be treated by taking Oseltamivir or Zanamivir. The DOH advised that self medication is discouraged because it may induce drug resistance.

However, there is no Influenza A (H1N1) vaccine yet. Process of production is underway but may take about five or six months according to DOH. The seasonal influenza vaccine, however, provides protection against seasonal influenza strains only.

Individuals at Increased Risk for Hospitalizations and Death

According to DOH, the following have an increased risk for catching the virus: (a) elderly above 65 years; (b) children less than two years old; (c) persons with certain chronic diseases (heart or lung disease including asthma, metabolic disease including diabetes, HIV/AIDS, other immunosuppression or suppression of a healthy immune response, and conditions that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions); and (d) pregnant women.

Government's Response

The following steps are being pursued by the government to prevent the spread of the Influenza A (H1N1):

- Activation of the DOH Management Committee on Prevention and Control of Re-Emerging Infectious Diseases (DOHMC-PCREID);
- Enhancing health surveillance in hospitals, seaports, and airports which include thermal scanning of arriving passengers from affected countries. This also include the emergency procurement of four additional thermal scanners;
- Conducting Health Declaration Checklist to screen for potential signs and symptoms & possible exposure to the virus;
- Distributing Health Alert Notice (HAN) to all arriving travelers who are strongly advised to monitor body temperature daily up to 10 days from date of arrival and to contact health authorities soonest if they become ill during this period;
- Issuance of travel advisory to the public
 - No travel ban but travelers are asked to reconsider their plans to travel to affected countries unless extremely necessary
 - The WHO does not recommend any travel restrictions or closure of borders at this time;
- Activation of **DOH HOTLINE (+632-7111001 / +632-7111002)** for immediate reporting of suspected Influenza A (H1N1), flu-like illness and atypical pneumonia by DOH regional Offices, local government units, hospitals, and the public;
- Firming up national stockpile of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the antiviral drug (Oseltamivir) and other logistics:
 - Priority will be high-risk exposure groups consisting of frontline health workers and surveillance teams
 - Interim Guidelines on Clinical Management of Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Infection and the Use of Antivirals
 - Interim Guidelines on the Use of Personal Protective Equipments and Infection Control During Influenza A (H1N1) Outbreaks; and
- Request for a PhP93.5 million calamity fund by the DOH to prepare the country into a possible pandemic.

Sources: Department of Health (Orientation on Influenza A (H1N1) for Government Employees) and World Health Organization bulletin.