

Upcoming Flu Season Demands Precautions

The United States continues to report the largest number of novel H1N1 flu virus cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Most people who have become ill have recovered without requiring medical treatment.

At the University of Rochester, key health, safety, and emergency officers are committed to the wellness of all members of the University community and are monitoring reports of the global pandemic and cases of H1N1 (earlier called swine flu). There are plans and procedures in place for swift communications and actions.

The University Health Service, in particular, recommends that before students arrive at the University or at Study Abroad locations, they should consider packing useful supplies like cold medicines, tissues, alcohol-based hand cleaners, and a thermometer in case they experience flu-like symptoms this fall and winter.

“We are concerned that we may have a more severe flu season than usual this winter, and it may start earlier than it has in the past,” said Dr. Ralph Manchester, director of University Health Service (UHS) and associate professor in the Department of Medicine at the School of Medicine and Dentistry. “Young adults may be particularly susceptible to the H1N1 strain of influenza, since they have never been exposed to it before.”

The H1N1 flu has been tracked in more than 70 countries, and it is not known at this time how severe it will become in the general population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers H1N1 “unique, because it is a combination of genes from pig (swine), bird, and human flu viruses.”

Students and families are asked to review common tips that make for healthy living and to help avoid the virus:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing and sneezing.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if they are available. Carry your own bottle of hand sanitizer and use it often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue whenever you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and then wash your hands.
- Get a flu shot. Look for announcements in the Weekly Buzz, the Campus Times, and fliers for dates and times for flu vaccine clinics.
- To keep from infecting others, stay in your room and avoid classes if you are sick. The CDC recommends staying home when you experience symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. Influenza is spread person-to-person mainly through coughing and sneezing by infected people.
- At this time, if you do not have symptoms of flu, you can work and attend school, even if there is an ill member in your residence hall or house.
- Stay informed. Web sites that are regularly updated and provide useful information include:
 - www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
 - www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/ - World Health Organization
 - www.rochester.edu/working/emergency - University Emergency Web page