

# H1N1 FAQ's

Updated 9-09-2009

The H1N1 virus has been a public health challenge for universities around the country, particularly since the average age of patients is about 20. Below are some frequently asked questions to help you better understand the H1N1 (swine) flu and UCF's efforts to keep our students, faculty and staff healthy.

## **How has UCF responded to the H1N1 virus?**

The health and well-being of our students, faculty and staff are our top priorities, and UCF has been working diligently to help our campus community stay healthy.

We also are working closely with the Florida Department of Health and local county health departments.

Our communications with the UCF community have included a dedicated H1N1 website ([www.ucf.edu/flu](http://www.ucf.edu/flu)), e-mail updates, posters in residence halls promoting good hygiene and presentations from resident assistants about steps students can take to stay healthy. Discussions regarding the H1N1 flu have taken place during orientation sessions for parents and students and in faculty and staff meetings throughout the campus.

We also are reaching out to students through an innovative hand-washing campaign that features a student walking around campus with a fake urinal. He reminds students to wash their hands frequently and offers other advice on how to stay healthy.

A team of staff, including representatives from Health Services, Housing & Residence Life and many other departments, meets regularly to discuss H1N1 and the university's response.

Our Health Center is taking same-day appointments for students as appropriate and has taken precautions to prevent/reduce the spread of the virus, such as placing students in masks immediately when they come in with flu symptoms.

At UCF, we are taking the H1N1 flu very seriously. We urge everyone on our campus and in our community to take it seriously as well. Focus on personal prevention and help yourself and others stay healthy.

## **What precautions is UCF taking for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces? What can I do?**

We are following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and precautions and are maintaining our standard cleaning and sanitizing measures, which are very thorough. In addition, housekeeping staff are being asked to clean common "touch points" such as doorknobs and soap dispenser handles as they travel through buildings. Housekeeping staff also continue to ensure that soap, paper towel and hand sanitizer dispensers remain full.

For information on cleaning precautions that you can take, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ga.htm> and scroll down to the "Contamination & Cleaning" section.

## **How does the H1N1 virus spread?**

Spread of this H1N1 virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. (Source: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov))

## **What are the best ways to protect myself from getting the virus?**

UCF Health Services advises students, faculty and staff to take the precautions outlined below to help themselves and others stay healthy. This advice is from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

## **What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?**

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds (or singing "Happy Birthday" to yourself twice). When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands. (Source: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov))

## **Should I get the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available, and will UCF provide it?**

The best way to prevent the spread of flu is by vaccination, and UCF urges faculty, staff and students to get both the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines. UCF will be offering seasonal flu vaccinations early in the semester and wants to vaccinate as many people as possible during a daylong flu shot event Sept. 30 at the UCF Arena.

A separate vaccine against H1N1 flu is expected to become available later, and it also will be offered at UCF. More information about those vaccinations will be provided as it becomes available.

## **What are the typical warning signs of the H1N1 virus, and what should I do if I suspect I have it?**

Flu-like symptoms include fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 C temperature), cough, sore throat, body aches, runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

If you have those symptoms, stay home until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (and are off of any fever-reducing medications). While at home, you should stay in a separate room and avoid

contact with others. If others are caring for you, we encourage you to wear a mask when they are in the room.

Drink plenty of clear fluids (such as water, broth and sports drinks) to keep from becoming dehydrated. Do not share food or drinks.

If your condition is severe, if you have a chronic health condition or if you are pregnant, we encourage you to make an appointment with your physician or UCF Health Services.

UCF encourages you to contact your professors or academic advisers by telephone or through your Knights e-mail account about classes and assignments that you may miss. We have urged professors to set deadline, makeup and attendance policies that take into account the fact that students should stay home if they are sick.

### **What happens if I'm a patient with flu symptoms who visits the UCF Health Center?**

Students experiencing flu-like symptoms are immediately given masks when they arrive at the Health Center. Students experiencing such symptoms may be offered a rapid influenza diagnostic test. If that test is positive, then the virus is almost certainly H1N1. The Health Center provider may prescribe the antiviral medication Tamiflu and instruct the student to stay in isolation.

The CDC recommends that individuals with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 C temperature) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Each student at the Health Center with a presumptive diagnosis for H1N1 flu is given a "Patient Care Advisory for H1N1" form with guidelines to help them recover quickly and prevent the spread of the virus.

Only the Florida Department of Health's laboratory system can perform the sub-type testing to confirm that a patient has the H1N1 virus, and the state has strictly limited the number of samples that are tested.

### **Am I at a higher risk of getting the H1N1 virus?**

People at high risk for complications of the H1N1 virus, and other strains of the seasonal flu, include those with the following conditions: Chronic pulmonary (including asthma); cardiovascular (except hypertension); renal, hepatic; hematological (including sickle cell disease); neurologic; neuromuscular; metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus); and obesity. Pregnant women also are at high risk for complications. Anyone in those high-risk groups should contact their health care provider if they exhibit flu-like symptoms.

### **If I am a student diagnosed with influenza, should I recover at home?**

Ideally, students can go back home to recover in a more comfortable setting with their families. For some students, however, staying in their residence hall or off-campus apartment may be the best or only option.

Ill students are urged to isolate themselves by keeping a social distance of about 6 feet from others, staying in their rooms as much as possible and taking all measures to prevent the virus from spreading

to others. Those measures include coughing or sneezing into tissues, washing your hands frequently and wearing a mask whenever you are around other people.

In on-campus housing and at Pegasus Landing, UCF has provided resident assistants with free flu care packages that can be given to students who are sick. The care packages, which include chicken soup and medication, also are available at the UCF Health Services Pharmacy or Knight Aide for only \$5.

### **If my roommate is diagnosed with influenza, what can I do?**

On-campus residents whose roommates are diagnosed with influenza and are staying on campus to recover can contact their resident assistants or other staff in their residence halls. Housing & Residence Life staff can determine if there are any other available rooms where the student could stay temporarily.

If you choose to stay with your sick roommate(s), take self-responsibility to keep yourself well. Encourage your roommate(s) to wear their masks in your presence; stay six feet away, wash your hands frequently and use a sanitizer to clean objects that both of you touch (countertops, doorknobs, kitchen utensils, etc.).

### **Whom should I contact if I have flu-like symptoms and need to miss class?**

UCF encourages you to contact your professors or academic advisers by telephone or through your Knights e-mail account about classes and assignments that you may miss. We have urged professors to set deadline, makeup and attendance policies that take into account the fact that students should stay home if they are sick.

UCF Health Services' "Patient Care Advisory for H1N1" includes guidelines and recommendations for students who are sick. The Health Center provides forms to students who show flu-like symptoms. Copies also are available on the UCF flu Web site, [www.ucf.edu/flu](http://www.ucf.edu/flu).

Make-up work for class(es) missed must be discussed with and agreed upon by faculty members. UCF appreciates any assistance faculty and staff members can give to students affected by H1N1.

Because of privacy laws concerning protected health information, UCF Health Services staff cannot notify faculty or staff members about a student's illness.

### **As a faculty member, what can I do to prepare for a larger number of absent students?**

Faculty may wish to plan for more technology-supported components for courses. Recording lectures as podcasts, providing lecture notes or capturing narrated PowerPoint lectures as videos to put on either your course Web site or the Knights E-Mail SkyDrive would allow students to access important class material. For assistance, contact the Faculty Center at [fctl@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:fctl@mail.ucf.edu).

Visit the Faculty Center's Web site, [www.fctl.ucf.edu](http://www.fctl.ucf.edu), for a list of other tools and strategies that can help you effectively teach classes with more students absent.

Faculty also are encouraged to make an alternate plan for class in case you are ill and must stay home and to remember that associates (including staff) may need to miss work for your protection.

Please see the Faculty Advisory at [www.ucf.edu/flu](http://www.ucf.edu/flu) for more information.

### **If I am an employee with flu symptoms, what should I do?**

Notify your supervisor that you are ill and will not be able to report to work. If you choose to see a healthcare provider and are diagnosed with influenza, you should stay in isolation until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100 degrees F or 37.8 C temperature) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

### **Can I work from home during the time when I am in isolation, if my young child falls ill or if H1N1 impacts my child-care arrangements?**

Employees should contact their departmental manager about the possibility of working at home. It may be allowed depending on the employees' job duties and whether the work can be completed at home.

Some UCF employees who are subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act for overtime (such as OPS and USPS employees) are not encouraged to work from home because of the difficulty in tracking hours and work production.

### **As a supervisor, what can I do to assist my employees who are sick and those who are healthy?**

Supervisors should contact Human Resources for assistance in making decisions about employees who appear sick and come to work. Those decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

UCF also encourages supervisors to advise employees of the steps they can take to stay healthy, such as washing their hands frequently and covering their nose and mouth with a tissue, or their sleeve if they do not have a tissue, when they cough or sneeze.

Supervisors also are encouraged to inform employees of the resources available on UCF's flu Web site, [www.ucf.edu/flu](http://www.ucf.edu/flu).

### **Where can I find more information about the H1N1 virus?**

The latest updates and advice from UCF can be found on the university's flu Web site, [www.ucf.edu/flu](http://www.ucf.edu/flu).

A more detailed Q&A from Human Resources is available at [www.hr.ucf.edu/web/TJI/H1N1\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.hr.ucf.edu/web/TJI/H1N1_FAQ.pdf)

For more information about the H1N1 virus and a broader list of frequently asked questions, you can visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Web site at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).