

Mr. Richard Daitch
President
Sport North
4908-49TH STREET, 3RD FLOOR, DON COOPER BUILDING
BOX 11089
YELLOWKNIFE NT X1A 3X7

Dear Mr. Daitch:

With the flu season here and many sporting events in the Northwest Territories (NWT) planned, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) would like to inform you on ways to reduce a possible outbreak of H1N1, or deal with cases of H1N1 during your sporting events.

Influenza is a common respiratory illness that should not be taken lightly. Each year thousands of Canadians fall ill with the seasonal flu, some seriously. H1N1 is a new form of the influenza virus that is very contagious and spreads easily between people, similar to the seasonal flu. Experience indicates that the majority of people in the NWT who contract the H1N1 virus will recover without the need for hospitalization.

To reduce the cases of H1N1 and the seasonal flu, we all need to be adopting appropriate prevention practices, including washing our hands with soap and water, covering our mouths with a tissue or elbow when we cough or sneeze, staying at home when we are sick, and getting vaccinated against both the seasonal flu and H1N1. To help spread the message, we ask that you read the attached "*Questions and Answers for Sporting Events and H1N1*," and "*H1N1 Flu – Slow the Spread*" brochure, and visit the Department of Health and Social Services website at www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca for the latest information on H1N1. Brochures, posters and stickers are also available online, or you can contact Damien Healy, Manager of Health and Social Services Planning and Communication, at (867) 920-8927 if you would like any of these materials.

We all have a role to play in helping to protect our own and each other's health during the coming flu season. Your regional Health and Social Services Authority can provide you with more information if you have questions. Your help in reminding your sports participants of the steps they can take to prepare for and protect themselves from the flu and distributing the brochure will also be important. I encourage all sport and recreation leaders to do their part over the coming months as we deal with this challenge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kandola', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Kami Kandola
Chief Public Health Office

Questions and Answers Sporting Events and H1N1

Q: How is H1N1 spread?

A: The H1N1 flu spreads just like the seasonal flu:

- person-to-person through coughing and sneezing; and
- contact with contaminated surfaces such as handles, doorknobs, counters and telephones.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A: The H1N1 flu virus causes symptoms similar to the seasonal flu. Key signs and symptoms include:

- Fever (38°C)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose

Other symptoms may include:

- Body aches
- Headaches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea or vomiting

If you have these signs and symptoms, stay at home and avoid close contact with others for **7 days** after your symptoms begin or until you have been **symptom-free for 24 hours**. Do not travel, go to work or school when sick.

Q: How can we slow the spread of the flu?

A: To help slow the spread of the seasonal flu and H1N1, everyone should:

- Stay home if you have influenza-like illness for at least a week or until symptoms resolve.
- When sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze in your sleeve. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Q: What should you do if you think you have H1N1?

A: If you think you have H1N1, call the Influenza Hotline at 1-888-920-3026 or the Health Line at 1-888-255-1010. You should only go to the emergency room or health clinic if your symptoms get worse or you have a chronic disease, pregnant, under 5 years old, or are over 65.

Q: Where can I get up-to-date information on H1N1?

A: For the latest information on H1N1, visit the Health and Social Services website at www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca or call the Influenza Hotline at 1-888-920-3026 or the Health Line at 1-888-255-1010.

Q: What steps can sport organizers take to help prevent participants, coordinators, and chaperones from getting sick?

A: There are a number of steps organizers can take to prevent the spread of illness at all times and not just during a flu pandemic. These steps include:

- ensure that there are adequate hand-washing stations and hand sanitizers for event participants and that there is signage to remind people of the proper hand-washing technique;
- encourage good hygiene by providing all organizers, participants, and chaperones with educational material (i.e. posters or brochures) and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes; washing hands with soap and water; and not sharing drinks, food or chapstick;
- keep additional tissue supplies and waste receptacles at the venue;
- have all coordinators, chaperones and organizers on alert to recognize flu symptoms and isolate anyone with flu symptoms;
- arrange to have parents/guardians pick-up sick participants as quickly as possible;
- get any organizers, chaperones, or coordinators who are ill to go home, and if that is not possible, ensure they self-isolate;
- if you have out-of-town participants, have a room with a cot available in case somebody gets sick and needs to be isolated; and
- advise all participants, organizers, coordinators, chaperones and families that sick people must stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have flu symptoms. It is especially important that they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines, like any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

Q: What happens if a participant becomes sick while en route to/from or at the organized event?

A: Participants who are feeling somewhat sick before an event should not attend. If the participant becomes sick during the event, the person should be isolated right away. Participants who are competing in their home town should be picked up by a family member right away. Out-of-town participants should be isolated from the other participants.

Q: Who will pay for a participant to go home early if he/she becomes sick?

A: Out-of-town participants who become sick while at a sporting event should not be sent home immediately. Travel should be avoided while sick. Participants from out-of-town should be isolated from the other participants. If the participant must travel while sick, the participant should wear a surgical mask or a bandana over the nose and mouth to avoid making other people sick.

Q: Will families be notified if a participant becomes sick at an event?

A: Organizers should work with chaperones to advise parents/guardians if a participant becomes ill at an event. Participants who are competing in their home town should be picked up by a family member right away. Out-of-town participants should be isolated from the other participants.

Q: Should we cancel sports events because of H1N1?

A: There is no need at this time to cancel sports events. Simple precautions at the individual level, like frequent hand washing, coughing and sneezing into the arm instead of hands, and staying home when sick will help slow the spread of the H1N1 flu virus.

Q: I hear Edmonton Soccer is banning shaking hands after the game. Should we do the same?

A: Banning shaking hand after the game is not necessary; however, all participants should be encouraged to wash their hands after each game, and to avoid touching their mouth, nose and eyes to avoid spreading germs.

Resources

- **Health and Social Services**
www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca
- **Public Health Agency of Canada**
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine_200904-eng.php
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.CDC.gov/h1n1flu/
- **World Health Organization**
www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html
- www.Fightflu.ca
- www.Pandemicflu.gov

For more information, call
your local health centre or
Health Line at 1-888-255-1010



**All strains of flu can be dangerous;
however, good infection prevention
can help protect you from any virus.**

H1N1 FLU

Slow the spread!

What is H1N1?

- H1N1 flu is a respiratory illness caused by a new type of the influenza virus.
- It is very contagious and spreads easily between people, similar to the regular seasonal flu.
- People can be infectious up to 7 days.

How is it spread?

- Person-to-person through coughing and sneezing.
- Contact with contaminated surfaces such as handles, doorknobs, counters, and telephones.

Protect yourself

- Avoid contact with people who have the flu.
- Avoid touching your mouth and nose.
- Clean hands often with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizer.
- Avoid crowds.
- Open windows in your home to have better airflow.
- Do not smoke.
- Have a smoke-free home.
- Stay healthy – getting enough sleep, eating healthy food, and keeping active.

Key Signs and Symptoms

- Fever (38°C)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose

If you have the key signs and symptoms:

Stay at home and avoid close contact with others for **7 days** after your symptoms begin or until you have been **symptom-free for 24 hours**, whatever is longer.

Do not travel, go to work or school when sick.

Other symptoms may include:

- Body aches
- Headaches
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea or vomiting

How to help relieve symptoms

1. Treat fevers over 38°C with acetaminophen or ibuprofen (do not give Aspirin to children with a fever), and a cool cloth to the face and neck.
2. Take lots of fluids and nutritious food, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and dairy products.
3. Have a smoke-free home.
4. If you are concerned, contact Health Line at 1-888-255-1010.
5. If illness gets worse, seek medical care.

When to seek medical care

If you experience any of the following:

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- A fever for more than three days.
- Children who have:
 - rapid or difficulty breathing or blue lips
 - sluggish behaviour
 - poor feeding or drinking
 - seizures

You are at higher risk for complications if you:

- have a history of chronic disease
- are pregnant
- are under five years of age
- are over sixty-five years of age