

H1N1 and Calvin College

H1N1 Update – September 4, 2009

Calvin Health Services has been closely monitoring H1N1 since last spring and, along with the Pandemic Response Steering Committee, is providing guidance to students and employees of the college.

We do so with the benefit of the research of such key organizations as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American College Health Association (ACHA), all of which monitor influenza around the world and provide guidance to health care providers, communities and schools based on their observations and research.

As of Sep. 3rd, Calvin College has no reported or confirmed cases of H1N1.

Health advice and recommended actions:

- **Stay informed.** For the latest flu information go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>
- Practice **PREVENTION**. There are things you can do to help you stay healthy. Influenza is **spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing** of infected people.
 - 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 hands cleaners are also effective.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
 - Avoid close contact (less than 6 feet) with sick people if possible
- **Stay home if you get sick.** Containment is the word of the day! Stay away from work or classes, and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- **Get vaccinated!**
 - Seasonal flu vaccine is available at Health Services now and we are planning flu clinics early this fall.
 - H1N1 vaccine will be made available in mid-October and distributed by states to many sites, including Calvin Health Services. We will keep you informed as we learn more, including when an on-campus clinic for the H1N1 vaccine might be.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

1. What's the flu? And what's the difference between seasonal flu and H1N1 (swine) flu??

Influenza ("flu") is the name given to **contagious respiratory illnesses** caused by a variety of influenza viruses. Flu can cause mild to severe illness, even death. Every year in the United States, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes. Some people, such as older individuals, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at higher risk for serious flu complications.

- **Seasonal influenza** is caused by viruses that are responsible for global seasonal flu epidemics each year. In the U.S., this influenza is experienced during the winter months primarily. Most people have some immunity to seasonal flu. A vaccine is available annually.
- **H1N1** (also known as novel H1N1, or swine flu) is a new influenza virus that was first detected in the U.S. in April 2009 and continues to spread around the world. It more commonly affects children and young adults. The virus causes relatively mild illness in most of those infected, but because it is new, most people have no immunity against it. As a result many more people could get the flu this year. For more information, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>.

2. How do I know if I've got H1N1?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus come on fairly quickly and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. While the disease is usually mild, severe illnesses and deaths have occurred.

If you are a student and want to talk to a health care provider about your symptoms, email nurse@calvin.edu. Let us know who you are and where you live. Tell us the best way to communicate with you (email, cell, dorm/house phone?). Since we don't want you to spread your illness by coming to the health center immediately, we'd like you to communicate first by phone or email.

Should you become very ill, call us to arrange to come in. To learn more about when you should seek medical help, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>.

3. Should I go home?

If you live in the area and can get supportive care at home, you may consider that. Exposing family members (especially those who may have underlying medical problems) should be a consideration in this decision.

4. How can I stay away from class or not go to work? Won't my professors dock my grades?

The provost's office has asked faculty members to work with students who report flu symptoms this fall. Sick students should email their profs and let them know that they are communicating with the health center (via nurse@calvin.edu). Health Center staff will not be able to provide written excuses for students but will advocate for those who have communicated with us, in the unlikely event they might run into problems with professors.

Campus administrators **prefer** that working students not report to work if they are ill!

5. When I can return to my classes or my job?

Flu typically lasts up to 7 days. You are actually contagious for 24 hours before you show signs of illness and until your fever has been gone for at least 24 hours.

If you are sick with a flu-like illness, **stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone** except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.). Keep away from others as much as possible.

6. What are the residence halls doing to prepare for an outbreak? How will I get food and supplies?

- On-campus students have all been issued disinfecting spray cleaners by custodial staff.
- Personal protective equipment is being made available at the residence hall front desks (face masks and disposal single-use thermometers).
- There is a dorm wing designated for quarantine (in a worst case scenario), but past campus disease outbreaks have been managed well by self-isolation and "social distancing" practices.
- The residence hall staff (RAs and RDs) has been trained to help students who are "confined to quarters". They will ensure that students have what they need during their illness.
- **Off-campus students** should seek assistance from housemates, or communicate with us to help coordinate their care should they need additional help.

Nancy VerMerris, director, Calvin Health Services

For more information, see the following links:

Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://pandemicflu.gov/index.html>

College surveillance report: http://www.acha.org/ILI_Surveillance.cfm