



October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

**M E D I A R E L E A S E**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Ministry of Health Confirms Local Cases of Influenza A/H1N1**

**Port of Spain, October 2, 2013:** The Ministry of Health has received information from the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) laboratory of six (6) confirmed local cases of Influenza A/H1N1.

In light of these new confirmations, locally, along with increased influenza activity in the Caribbean region at this time, the Ministry wishes to assure the public that all systems for response to influenza cases are in place at our local institutions and advise that citizens follow the instructions given to them by medical professionals.

The Ministry would like to remind the public to practice good personal hygiene to protect themselves and others from acquiring the influenza (flu) virus. Regular hand-washing is important for your **OWN** protection and that of others.

Symptoms of the Influenza virus include:

- Sudden high fever (over 38°C or 100°F)
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Coughing
- Headache
- Body aches
- Fatigue

Persons experiencing Influenza-like symptoms and **any signs of faintness, weakness or breathing difficulty** should present immediately to the nearest Hospital Emergency Room for management.

Persons in high-risk groups experiencing flu-like symptoms should seek early medical attention. These groups include:

- Pregnant women
- Children under 2 years of age;
- Persons with respiratory complications like asthma and chronic lung disease;
- Persons with weakened immune systems including persons on chemotherapy or immunosuppressive therapy for transplants or other medical conditions;
- Persons with chronic non-communicable diseases including diabetes;
- Persons 65 years and older;

[www.health.gov.tt](http://www.health.gov.tt)

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## HOW IS THE FLU SPREAD?

The main way influenza (flu) viruses are spread is through droplets released into the air from the coughs and sneezes of an infected person. This can happen when droplets are inhaled directly by people nearby. Some droplets containing the virus also fall on hard surfaces (like desks, tables, phones and door knobs). People pick up the virus when they touch these surfaces and then touch their eyes, mouth or nose.

Another common method of infection is by shaking hands with someone who has not maintained proper respiratory and hand hygiene, and failing to wash your own hands before touching your face (especially your nose).

## When can an infected person spread the flu virus to others?

Infected persons can spread the flu virus from 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 days after symptoms appear. Children, especially younger children, can be contagious for much longer periods (10 – 14 days)

## WHAT SHOULD A PERSON DO IF HE GETS THE FLU?

Practice good personal hygiene including:

- Washing hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 70% alcohol, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Show children how to wash their hands properly and practice it with them.
- Avoid close contact (hugging, shaking hands, etc) with persons who show symptoms of influenza.
- Keeping hands away from the eyes, mouth and nose. Germs can be spread or enter the body this way.
- Persons should cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing - or cough into their sleeve or elbow if they don't have a tissue handy – throw the tissue in a bin after use, and wash their hands with soap and water again
- People with symptoms of flu-like illness should stay away from work or school for 7 – 10 days or until at least 24 hours after **ALL SYMPTOMS have ended**, whichever is longer.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids to keep hydrated.
- Monitor symptoms: Check for emergency warning signs (faintness, weakness, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing) and seek immediate medical attention if symptoms worsen or warning signs develop.

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