

INFLUENZA A (H1N1)

May 1st, 2009

Influenza A (H1N1), formerly known as Swine Influenza (swine flu), is a respiratory disease originally detected on pigs caused by type A influenza. The World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed a number of positive cases of human to human infection from a H1N1 version, which shows characteristics not previously detected in pigs or human beings, in an increasing number of countries worldwide.

The impact of a pandemic is difficult to predict, it depends on virulence of the virus, existing immunity among people, cross protection acquired from seasonal influenza infection and host factors. There is currently no human vaccine against it and a limited number of antiviral drugs have been cleared for human treatment. For the most updated information, please use the following link to the WHO web site: <http://www.who.int/en/>

The rapid evolution of the events in Mexico and the United States, and the detection of the first cases in European countries call for heightened awareness and vigilance of health professionals and authorities in Europe, to ensure the early detection and management of possibly related events. As the world moves on towards the pandemic phase as per WHO's pandemic preparedness scheme, health organisations confirm the need for controlling and prevention activities as sustained human to human transmission is now evident across national borders

Based on the limited information available from official sites to date and given the absence of test results for this particular virus, KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL* defined the following framework as per type of exposure:

1. Higher risk applications

Influenza A (H1N1) is "respiratory based" (similar to other flu viruses). The basic building blocks for prevention are built around using a combination of personal protective equipment, hand hygiene and the reinforcement of healthy habits for personal protection and hygiene and cleaning systems for potentially contaminated environment disinfection to help to limit exposure and reduce the risk of contamination.

- Kimberly-Clark is not aware to date of any specific guidance that recommends the use of respirators for use of general public in the event of pandemic situation. It is then suggested by KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL* that respiratory protection can be improved through the use of EC certified FFP2 or FFP3 particle disposable respirators. Other personal protective equipment may include gloves and garments with the adequate biological protection levels. Safety glasses can only partially protect against droplets and splashes. Air powered systems with viral filtration and the use of goggles and full face shields should be considered for more hazardous tasks.
- Good hygiene practices are essential in all contact with animals and are especially important during slaughter and post-slaughter handling. Frequent hand washing with antimicrobial soap and minimum contact of hands with eyes, mouth and nose are highly recommended.
- Cleaning systems with antimicrobial components can help to prevent the spread of the virus; alcohol-based systems can also be effective.

2. Personal contamination prevention and cross contamination containment.

The following measures for the construction of the prevention building blocks are recommended:

- Respiratory protection could be based on the use of EC certified FFP2 or FFP3 particle disposable respirators. Alternatively, masks can provide limited levels of protection against means of human-to-human transmission like coughing and sneezing. Avoid the use of valved respirators if you feel unwell or perceive any symptoms like coughing or sneezing. KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL strongly recommends checking with national health authorities across Europe as other classes or types of respiratory devices with lower/limited levels of protection (i.e. FFP1 particulate respirators, disposable face veils) become cleared for preventive general public use. The WHO recommends disposal of the filtering device after use, especially when its serviceability is suspected to be affected.
- Good hand hygiene based on the use of antimicrobial soaps and disposable tissues and hand towels, and the reinforcement of healthy habits for personal protection and cleaning systems for environment disinfection.
- Avoid contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and cough. Avoid contact with other people if you feel unwell and report your case to the local health authorities/provider.
- Practice good health and nutritional habits to improve the condition of your immune system.

KIMBERLY-CLARK PROFESSIONAL* suggests the attached product list to limit exposure and reduce biological contamination risk. For official information on the Influenza A (H1N1), follow this link to the official website of the European Centre of Disease Control: <http://ecdc.europa.eu/>

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Kimberly-Clark's representatives recommendation on a particular personal protective device can only be taken as a guidance for compliant product selection based on already available risk evaluation data that determines the level of protection required for particular hazards previously assessed. It is KIMBERLY-CLARK's intent to provide product alternatives and data which can enable trained professionals to make an informed choice.