



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
SINGAPORE

MH 34:85

7 May 2009

All Registered Medical Practitioners
All Licensees of Healthcare Establishments

MOH CIRCULAR 44/2009
ALERT: INFLUENZA A (H1N1-2009)

1. Our Disease Outbreak Response System Alert (DORSCON) status is currently at Orange. Although the case fatality rate was initially reported to be as high as 6% in Mexico, additional information on the influenza A (H1N1-2009) virus has emerged to suggest that Influenza A (H1N1 2009) seems milder than originally feared.

2. Reports of underreporting of mild cases, and reclassification of a number of deaths initially thought to be caused by H1N1 suggest a much lower case fatality in Mexico. An analysis of New York City cases associated with influenza outbreak in a high school there showed that there were no severe cases which required hospitalization. In addition, the 125 confirmed cases in Europe outside North America are mostly mild, and no death has been reported. In Singapore, there are still no human cases of influenza A (H1N1-2009).

3. After a careful review of the latest outbreak situation involving influenza A (H1N1-2009), MOH has decided to progressively downgrade our DORSCON Alert status from ORANGE to YELLOW beginning 7 May 09, and to reach full DORSCON YELLOW status by Monday, 11 May 09. (Please refer to **Annex A** for details on the transition of measures)

ADVICE TO PRACTITIONERS

4. The case definition for a suspected case of influenza A (H1N1-2009) virus infection is defined as an individual with an acute febrile respiratory illness (fever $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$)¹ with onset of symptoms:

- a) Within 7 days of travel history to affected areas², or;

¹ Persons who may not manifest fever include those on dialysis or immunosuppressive medications.



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- b) Within 7 days of close contact with a person who is a probable case or a confirmed case of influenza A (H1N1-2009).

5. Any patient who meets the case definition in Paragraph 4 should be referred immediately to the Emergency Medicine Department at Tan Tock Seng Hospital³. Medical practitioners should arrange for these patients to be transferred by ambulance by calling the dedicated ambulance service at 993 (available 24 hours).

6. The Ministry of Health should also be **notified immediately** of suspected cases. Please contact the Communicable Diseases Division at 98171463 (available 24 hours)⁴. MOH will inform the notifying doctor of the need for contact tracing and prophylaxis.

7. Recommendations on the management of patients with variable travel history and symptoms are at the following table:

Symptoms	Travel history (within the last 7 days)		
	Mexico ⁵	Other Affected Areas i.e. USA & Canada ²	Other countries with or without confirmed cases
Fever ⁶ + respiratory symptoms ⁷	Refer to TTSH	Refer to TTSH	Treat as per seasonal influenza ⁸
Fever only	Refer to TTSH	Refer to TTSH	Treat as per seasonal influenza
Respiratory symptoms only	Refer to TTSH	7 day monitoring for fever, symptomatic treatment, stay at home and observe good hygiene practices. Seek medical assistance if symptoms deteriorate.	Treat as per seasonal influenza
Nil	Remain under HQO	7 day monitoring for fever, observe good hygiene practices. No need to stay at home.	Not Applicable

8. Please note that persons who return from other affected areas (besides Mexico), should be advised to monitor their temperature daily for fever for a period of 7 days after returning from the affected area, and to check for flu-like symptoms.

² Affected areas currently refer to the US, Canada and Mexico. Please refer to MOH website for the latest list of Affected Areas: <http://www.moh.gov.sg>

³ Medical practitioners in public sector institutions should follow advisories relevant to their institutions

⁴ The hotline for Communicable Diseases Division, MOH is for notification of suspected cases of Influenza A(H1N1-2009). General enquiries should be directed to the MOH hotline numbers: **1800-225-4122**, or; **1800-333-9999**. Other useful contact numbers are CFPS: 6221 8608 (8:30am – 6pm, Mon- Fri), SMA: 62231264 (8:30am – 6pm, Mon – Fri)

⁵ From 4 May 09, persons arriving in Singapore within 7 days after having departed Mexico will be issued a HQO.

⁶ **Fever** is defined as a temperature of >38°C, or a history of fever

⁷ **Respiratory symptoms** comprise symptoms such as sore throat, rhinorrhoea, cough and myalgia

⁸ Patients are to seek medical assistance if symptoms persist or worsen.

They can continue with their regular activities but persons who develop fever or symptoms should seek medical assistance immediately.

CONTINUED VIGILANCE NEEDED

9. We will continue to maintain vigilance in preparation for a possible second, more severe, wave, and are prepared to raise the DORSCON level again if the character of the virus changes and becomes more virulent. The fight against an influenza pandemic will be a long drawn one. We seek your cooperation in our efforts to protect the health of people living in Singapore.

10. For updates on this evolving situation, please refer to the MOH website www.moh.gov.sg For further clarifications of this circular, please email moh_info@moh.gov.sg or contact MOH hotline on 1800-333-9999.

11. If you are a licensee of a healthcare establishment, or a manager of a laboratory, please bring the contents of this circular to the attention of the relevant healthcare professionals in your establishment/laboratory.



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MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PROGRESSIVE TRANSITION TO DORSCON YELLOW

ANNEX A

	Current (Orange)	From 7 May 09	From 11 May 09 (YELLOW) - Following review on 10 May 09
Health Care Settings			
Hospitals			
<i>Personal Protection</i>			
PPE	Full PPE in all patient contact areas	Full PPE for healthcare workers only in high-risk areas e.g. ICU, A&E. Healthcare workers should continue to use appropriate PPE in all other areas.	No change
<i>Infection Control</i>			
Triage of Febrile Patients	Triage of patients at SOCs and EDs	No change	No change
Isolation	Isolation of all potentially infectious patients	No change	No change
Zoning of NHs & RH	Patients transfers restricted to between linked RH and NHs.	No change	To lift restriction.
Interhospital Movement of Patients	Restricted to medically indicated transfers only.	No change	No change
Interhospital Movement of Doctors & HCW	Restricted to essential services.	No change	No change
MOPEX / HOPEX	To suspend MOPEX / HOPEX rotations.	No change	To resume in 2 weeks from 11 May 09.
Clinical Postings of Students	Clinical postings of medical, nursing and pharmacy students to be suspended.	No change	To resume.
Hospital Visitor Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to 1 visitor per patient except under extenuating circumstances. • Enforce visiting hours. • Recording of all visitor details • Temperature screening and screening of flu like symptoms of visitors to clinical areas only e.g. wards, ICU, ED, SOCs, day surgery etc. 	Restriction of hospital visitors to 2 per patient at any one time. Other measures no change	No change

PROGRESSIVE TRANSITION TO DORSCON YELLOW

	Current (Orange)	From 7 May 09	From 11 May 09 (YELLOW) - Following review on 10 May 09
Management of Cases			
Referral of Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suspect cases to be managed within all public hospitals Private Hospitals to refer suspect cases to TTSH/CDC 	No change	No change
Use of 993 Ambulance	To transport all suspect cases referred to TTSH/CDC	No change	No change
Contact Tracing	To initiate for confirmed and probable cases only	No change	No change
Use of Anti-Virals (Treatment)	For confirmed/probable/suspect cases.	No change	No change
Use of Anti-Virals (Prophylaxis)	Prophylaxis for close contacts with sustained exposure	No change	No change
Discharge Criteria	The patient must be clinically stable and Influenza RT-PCR negative for 2 samples taken 12-24hrs apart.	No change	No change
Staff Measures			
Health Surveillance of Staff	Twice daily temperature monitoring of staff Monitoring for clusters of ILI for staff working in the same locations	No change	No change
Staff Preparations	Hospitals should exercise pandemic preparedness plans, conduct appropriate staff training and to exercise and standby rapid response teams	No change	No change
Staff Travel (Hospital Staff)	To avoid non-essential travel to affected areas.	No change	No change
Surveillance			
Enhanced Surveillance	Labs to do enhanced surveillance for fever, ILI symptoms and travel history at EDs and Outpatient Centers.	No change	No change
	Patients currently warded for pneumonia should be checked for travel history or close contact with people with travel history to affected areas in the last 7 days before the onset of their illness and should have a full lab workup for Influenza A.	No change	No change

PROGRESSIVE TRANSITION TO DORSCON YELLOW

	Current (Orange)	From 7 May 09	From 11 May 09 (YELLOW) - Following review on 10 May 09
Expanding Capacity			
Electives	Elective cases to be wound down to create capacity. CMBs and Senior clinicians to exercise clinical judgement and postpone non-urgent elective cases accordingly	No change	No change.
ICUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ramp up to Level 3 capacity. To conduct just-in-time training for ex-ICU staff 	No change	No change.
GPs / Polyclinic			
Personal Protection			
PPE	Staff at triage to wear full PPE	No change.	No change.
	Doctors to wear full PPE	Full PPE only for high-risk patients.	No change
Infection Control			
Triage	Triage for flu / non-flu patients	No change	No change
	Declaration form for patients	No change	No change
	Temperature taking for all patients	No change	No change
Community Hospitals			
Personal Protection			
PPE	Doctor / HCW wear full PPE.	Full PPE only for high-risk patients.	No change
	Staff at visitor reception wear full PPE.	No change	No change
Infection Control			
Zoning of CHs & RHs	Zoning put in place with 7-day Quarantine Rule	No change	Lifted.
Visitor Rules	Declaration form for visitors	No change	No change
	Temperature taking for all visitors	No change	No change
Border Health Controls			
Travelers from Affected Countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQO for travelers returning from Mexico Travelers from other affected areas to stay home if possible and monitor own health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQO for travelers returning from Mexico (No change) Travelers from other affected areas to monitor own health and continue with normal activities but if unwell/febrile/cough to call 993. 	No change

PROGRESSIVE TRANSITION TO DORSCON YELLOW

	Current (Orange)	From 7 May 09	From 11 May 09 (YELLOW) - Following review on 10 May 09
Health Alert Notice for Inbound Travelers	Currently in place.	No change	No change
Temperature Checks for Inbound Travelers	Temperature screening at air / sea and land check points.	No change	No change
Health Declaration Card	Only for travelers from Mexico.	No change	No change
Referral of Suspect Cases	To refer all suspect cases to TTSH/CDC	No change	No change
Community Measures			
Buildings & Events			
Screening at Workplaces, Schools, Buildings & Events (Non-Healthcare)	Screening for temperature, flu-like symptoms and travel history for visitors to buildings and events.	Lifted.	No change
Staff of Workplaces			
Temperature Monitoring for Staff at workplaces (Non-Healthcare Settings)	Twice daily temperature taking and monitoring for flu-like symptoms.	Lifted.	No change