

## 10 Steps You Can Take Today:

### Actions for Novel H1N1 Influenza Planning and Response for Medical Offices and Outpatient Facilities



It is critical to assure family physician offices and other outpatient facilities (e.g., outpatient/ambulatory clinics, outpatient surgery centers, urgent care centers, physical therapy/rehabilitation offices or clinics) that provide routine, episodic, and/or chronic health care services can manage an increased demand for services in the midst of the H1N1 influenza outbreak.

CAFP is committed to helping its members and their patients prepare for flu season, including providing up-to-date information on the virus and vaccines, immunization recommendations and availability, tips to prepare offices and clinics, and patient education materials. CAFP will work with the AAFP and California DPH Immunization Branch to keep you informed and ready to respond.

**1. Develop a business continuity plan:** Novel H1N1 flu outbreaks will impact your organization, employees, suppliers of critical material, and your family. Identify your office/clinic's essential functions and the individuals who perform them. Make sure you have trained enough people

to properly work in these essential functions and allow for potential absenteeism. Develop a plan that will sustain your core business activities for several weeks. Make sure you have alternate plans for critical supplies in case there is disruption in your supply chains. For information about planning see the Business Plan on this site, or <http://www.ready.gov/business/plan/index.html>.

**First and Foremost:**  
Vaccinate *everyone*  
on your practice team,  
including *yourself!*

**2. Inform employees about your plan for coping with additional surge during pandemic:** Provide clear and frequent communication to ensure that your staff members are aware and understand the plan. Explain any policies and procedures that will be used to protect staff and your patients, and to manage a surge of patients. Improve the resiliency of your staff by advising that employees have a pandemic family plan or personal plans.

**3. Plan to operate your facility if there is significant staff absenteeism:** Are you ready for 20 to 40% of your employees being unable to come to work? Cross training your staff is key to resilience here. What else can be done to assure continuity of operations with reduced staff?

**4. Protect your workplace by asking sick employees to stay home:** Be sure to ask sick staff to stay home. All personnel should self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of febrile respiratory illness. Staff who develop these symptoms should be instructed not to report to work, or if at work, should cease patient care activities and notify their supervisor. Be sure to align your sick leave policies so ill staff can stay home.

**5. Plan for a surge of patients and increased demands for your services:** Consider using your telephone system to deliver messages to incoming callers about when to seek medical care at your facility, when to seek emergency care, and where to go for information about caring for a person with flu at home (see Interim Guidance for H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home). Consider extending your hours of operation to include telephone triage of patients during a community outbreak.





**6. Care for patients with novel H1N1 flu in your facility:** Make plans to screen patients for signs and symptoms of febrile respiratory illness at entry to the facility. If feasible, use separate waiting and exam rooms for possible novel H1N1 flu patients; plan to offer surgical masks to symptomatic patients who are able to wear them (adult and pediatric sizes should be available), provide facial tissues, receptacles for their disposal, and provide hand hygiene products in waiting areas and examination rooms.

**7. Take steps to protect the health of your workforce during an outbreak of H1N1:** All health care personnel who come in close contact with patients who may have novel H1N1 flu should take precautions to include use of respiratory and eye protection for all patient care activities. For information on the use of infection control measures including use of personal protective equipment for staff. Plan now to stockpile sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for your staff.

**8. Provide immunization against seasonal flu at no cost to your staff:** In the fall there may be several influenza strains circulating at the same time. Although seasonal flu immunization will not provide protection for novel H1N1 influenza, annual influenza vaccination is recommended for health care professionals and will likely protect against seasonal influenza strains.

**9. Make sure you know about the pandemic planning and response activities of the hospitals, outpatient facilities and local public health in your community:** Actively seek information from and coordinate with key medical, clinical facilities and public health departments in your community to learn about how they will manage patients during a pandemic. Medical offices, emergency rooms, urgent care centers and hospitals in communities with outbreaks will likely have difficulty managing a large influx of patients; a coordinated community response is important to manage surge and assure optimal patient care. Develop a plan to manage your patients who do not need to seek emergency services.

**10. Plan now so you will know where to turn to for reliable, up-to-date information in your local community:** Staff in health care settings should monitor the CDC H1N1 Flu Web site and local and State health department websites for the latest information. See these Web sites for contact information for local health departments and State health departments.

Be prepared for a range of situations. The true impact of novel H1N1 flu outbreaks in the coming months will not be known until it happens. Be prepared for a possibility that your facility will have significant increased demand for services and the possibility that the fall outbreak may have greater impact than the outbreak in the spring, 2009.

For more information, to review Guidance documents, or to see the Medical Offices and Clinics Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Also sign up to receive regular updates about novel H1N1 influenza, emerging infectious diseases, and other emergency preparedness and response information by going to [www.emergency.cdc.gov/clinregistry](http://www.emergency.cdc.gov/clinregistry). Ensuring a sustainable community health care response will be important for a likely recurrence of novel H1N1 flu in the fall.

**CHECK:**  
[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
[www.aafp.org](http://www.aafp.org)