

CIT – Influenza A(H1N1) Advice For Staff

This document provides CIT staff with general guidance on dealing with Influenza a (H1N1) /Swine Flu.

Cork Institute of Technology is open as normal and teaching and assessments are taking place as scheduled. Do not panic, most people with the virus are recovering within a week and need no anti-viral medication.

1. WHAT IS THE INFLUENZA A(H1N1) VIRUS?

This is a new type of influenza or “flu” that is currently causing outbreaks of disease in people globally. It spreads mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Occasionally people may become infected by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus, and then touching their own mouth or nose.

2. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA A(H1N1) VIRUS INFECTION?

The symptoms appear to be similar to that of regular human flu, and include, fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, lethargy, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhoea and vomiting associated with the virus. Most individuals will recover from this virus without antiviral medication or hospitalisation.

3. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INFLUENZA A(H1N1) AND THE COMMON COLD?

The main difference is that symptoms of influenza come on rapidly and are typically accompanied by muscle aches and a fever. For a full list of differences, please see table below:

Symptoms	Influenza A(H1N1)	Common Cold
Onset	Sudden	Slow
Fever	Characteristically High (\geq 38° Celsius or 100° Fahrenheit)	Rare
Headache	Prominent	Rare
General Aches & Pains	Usual, often severe	Rare
Fatigue & Weakness	Can be prolonged for a number of weeks	Quite Mild
Extreme Exhaustion	Early & prominent	Never
Runny Nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Usual
Sore Throat	Common	Common
Cough	Common, can be severe	Mild to moderate, hacking cough
Diarrhoea, vomiting	Sometimes	Not associated with common cold in adults

4. HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF FROM THE A(H1N1) VIRUS

Protective measures to avoid getting or spreading the influenza A (H1N1) virus are the same as for flu and include:

- Trying to avoid contact with people who appear unwell
- Always carry tissues
- Use clean tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze and bin the tissues immediately after use.
- Washing your hands often with soap and water or a sanitiser gel often
- If you become ill, limiting contact with others to avoid infecting them

5. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM SICK WITH FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS?

If you experience flu-like symptoms, do not come to CIT, stay at home and call your GP.

The HSE also have a 24 hour HSE Flu Information Line Freephone 1800-941100.

He/she will advise you appropriately and will tell you when you can return to the Institute. Normal Procedures for absenteeism will apply. Report to your manager on the first day of absence between 9 and 10am, any if you are absent for more than three days you need medical certification.

If you are diagnosed with the virus you should update the Institute of your condition throughout. You should contact your Head of Department/Line Manager/Human Resources Department or email: influenza@cit.ie as soon as possible regarding your illness.

6. WHO ARE CATEGORISED AS HIGH –RISK GROUPS?

People who have: chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease; people whose immune system is reduced by disease or medications; people with diabetes mellitus; people aged 65 years and older; children under 5 (children under 2 are at particular risk of influenza); people on medication for asthma, severely obese people (body mass index more than 40) and pregnant women.

7. WHAT DOES THE TREATMENT PHASE INVOLVE?

Given that flu causes mostly moderate illness, most people recover at home without needing anti-viral medicine but by taking plenty of rest and drinking plenty of fluids.

8. WHAT IF ANOTHER COLLEAGUE HAS INFLUENZA, SHOULD I COME TO COLLEGE?

There is no need to panic, come to college as normal. If at any point you develop flu-like symptoms call your GP for advice.

9. WHAT ABOUT TRAVEL?

Travel Advice is available on the Department of Health website <http://www.dohc.ie>. This site is updated regularly.

10. WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Information on the virus and updates can be found on the following web sites:

<http://www.hpsc.ie/>

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/swineflu>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

<http://www.dohc.ie>

Any specific information regarding the virus and CIT information will be on the following web link: www.cit.ie/influenza