



Workforce Guidelines: H1N1 Influenza and Flu-like Illness

This document provides guidance to University supervisors and employees on how to handle H1N1 influenza (swine flu) and flu-like illness in the Princeton University workplace. Detailed flu guidelines for the campus community can be found on the University's H1N1 Web page at <http://web.princeton.edu/sites/emergency/swineflu>.

OVERVIEW

H1N1 (swine) influenza is a respiratory disease caused by the type A influenza virus.

Influenza is thought to spread primarily person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected people, or when someone touches something with flu viruses on it and then touches their mouth or nose. Infected people may be able to spread the virus to others beginning one day (24 hours) before symptoms develop, and up to seven or more days after becoming sick.

Flu symptoms usually develop within three to four days of contact with an infected person, though it may take up to seven days. Symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to seasonal influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting. Individuals experiencing these symptoms—especially fever—are considered contagious. **Because it will be difficult to determine if someone has H1N1 flu or seasonal flu, employees with flu-like symptoms should not come to work and self-isolate at home until they are no longer contagious in order to prevent the spread of illness.**

Staff members experiencing flu-like symptoms (i.e., fever with cough and/or sore throat) should go home, or remain at home, and contact their personal physicians. Staff members should self-isolate, i.e., stay away from others in their homes, until no longer contagious. The guideline is to remain isolated during illness and for at least 24 hours after fever is gone except to get medical care (fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medication). Staff members should consult with their personal physician to determine when they are no longer contagious and can return to work. In most cases, employees may plan on returning to work after the period of self-isolation is completed.

If you are an employee who is experiencing flu-like symptoms:

- Inform your supervisor that you are experiencing flu-like symptoms and leave the workplace as soon as possible, i.e., go home. Contact your personal physician and follow his/her instructions.
- **To avoid spreading the virus, you should stay at home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone** except to get medical care (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). You should keep away from others as much as possible. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.
- If you do not leave the workplace, your supervisor will notify the Office of Human Resources (HR) or the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (DoF). Designated HR or DoF staff members, in consultation with the Office of Employee Health and your supervisor, may make the decision that you need to leave work for a period of time in order to prevent the spread of illness to others.
- HR's sporadic absence policy applies to regular, non-faculty, benefits-eligible staff and you may use it to cover your own personal illness or for the care of an immediate family member who is ill. Unionized employees should refer to their collective bargaining agreements. For more information, see www.princeton.edu/hr/policies/leaves/3.1/3.1.6.

If you do not have sufficient sporadic absence time, you may use accrued vacation, compelling reason, or optional holiday time, or take an unpaid leave. Also, as a temporary change to the [sporadic absence policy](#) from September 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, you may borrow up to eight sporadic absence days from your FY2011 sporadic absence day allocation with the following provisions:

- Borrowing time is to be used only for absences from H1N1 or flu-like illness.
 - A maximum of four sporadic absence days can be used for each occurrence of H1N1 or flu-like illness.
 - No more than eight sporadic absence days can be borrowed during this period.
 - If you have more than 30 days of vacation accrued, you are expected to use that time before being advanced sporadic absence time.
- If you are sick and absent from work for at least eight (8) full consecutive calendar days, you may qualify for short-term disability, under which you receive your full base salary. A medical certificate from your physician is required to apply for short-term disability. For more information, see www.princeton.edu/hr/benefits/disability/std/.

- You should consult with your doctor about when you are able to return to work but, in most cases, you should plan on returning to work after the recommended self-isolation period, which is during illness and for at least 24 hours after fever is gone (fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).
- You do not need a doctor's note to return to work. However, if you qualify for short-term disability or FMLA leave, you must obtain a medical certificate from your physician prior to returning to work. For more information, see www.princeton.edu/hr/benefits/disability/std/.

If you are the supervisor of an employee who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms:

- Ask the employee to leave the workplace, i.e., go home, and contact his/her personal physician. (Recognize that the symptoms of H1N1 are similar to a variety of other illnesses, such as allergies. Accordingly, you should proceed carefully and thoughtfully.) If you have questions, please contact HR or the DoF.
- If the employee does not leave the workplace, contact Human Resources or the Dean of the Faculty as appropriate. Designated HR or DoF staff members, in consultation with the Office of Employee Health, may require the employee to leave the workplace for a period of time in order to prevent the spread of illness to others.
- As with any other medical condition and to ensure the privacy of personal health information, you should not ask or require the employee to tell you whether or not they have been diagnosed with H1N1 or flu-like illness. Requiring your employee to disclose confidential medical information or medical conditions violates University policy and may violate applicable law. If the employee voluntarily tells you that they have been diagnosed with H1N1 or flu-like illness, you should not share this information with others in your department without first consulting with HR or the DoF.
- Discuss using sporadic absence days, and let the employee know about short-term disability, which they might be eligible to receive if absent from work for eight consecutive calendar days.

If the employee has exhausted his/her sporadic absence days, discuss using their using accrued vacation, compelling reason, or optional holiday time, or taking an unpaid leave. Let the employee know that as a temporary change to the [sporadic absence policy](#) from September 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, they may borrow up to eight sporadic absence days from their FY2011 sporadic absence day allocation with the following provisions:

- Borrowing time is to be used only for absences from H1N1 or flu-like illness.
- A maximum of four sporadic absence days can be used for each occurrence of H1N1 or flu-like illness.

- No more than eight sporadic absence days can be borrowed during this period.
 - If they have more than 30 days of vacation accrued, they are expected to use that time before being advanced sporadic absence time.
- In certain cases, you may wish to consult with HR and Employee Health Services before permitting an employee to return to the workplace. However, employees do not need a doctor's note to return to work unless they are returning from short-term disability. They will then need to follow work procedures related to short-term disability.
 - You do not need to take special precautions once the employee has returned to work.
 - If another employee is concerned about exposure to H1N1 through contact with an infected employee, tell the employee to consult their personal physician, and/or HR or the DoF as appropriate.

If you are the coworker of an employee who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms:

- If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to H1N1 and/or you are exhibiting flu-like symptoms, contact your personal physician, and/or HR.
- You can help protect yourself and others from getting sick by practicing good hygiene at all times. Recommended precautions include washing your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
- If you believe you need to minimize your exposure to illness because you or a family member has a compromised immune system, ask your supervisor if it is feasible and/or appropriate for you to work from home for a limited, defined period of time. Your supervisor will consider this request, and consult with HR or the DoF as appropriate. Ultimately, it is your supervisor's decision based on operational needs whether or not to approve this request.
- If you have a high-risk medical situation (i.e., people with chronic medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes, people with immunosuppression or pregnant women), contact your personal physician to determine what is best for you. Ask your supervisor about implementing any changes your physician suggests.

University Health Services' Role

Princeton's University Health Services (UHS) keeps up to date with recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the State of New Jersey on H1N1 and other influenza-like illnesses. Staff members in Employee Health Services can answer questions and concerns about H1N1 and assist in educating staff members, especially

those at higher risk for illness than the general population, and can provide employees who do not have a personal physician with a list of physicians in the Princeton area. You can contact Employee Health Services at (609) 258-5035.

If the incidence of flu infection becomes widespread around the campus, the University will communicate specific workplace procedures or policies at the appropriate time.

EMPLOYEE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. I have been coughing, sneezing, and running a fever. What should I do?

Employees experiencing flu-like symptoms (i.e., fever with cough and/or sore throat) should not come to work and should self-isolate in their homes until they are no longer contagious. The guideline is to remain isolated during illness and for at least 24 hours after the ill person's fever is gone, except to get medical care (fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

Employees feeling sick should notify their supervisor of their absence from work and contact their personal physicians. Employees who do not have a personal physician and would like a list of physicians in the Princeton area should call Employee Health Services at (609) 258-5035 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

2. How do I know if my symptoms are H1N1 flu or seasonal flu?

It will be difficult to determine if someone who is sick has H1N1 flu or seasonal flu because the symptoms are very similar (i.e. fever with cough and/or sore throat). Given the worldwide presence of H1N1 flu, federal and state health officials are not recommending laboratory tests in all cases to determine whether an ill person has H1N1 flu. Because it will be difficult to determine if someone has H1N1 flu or seasonal flu, employees with flu-like symptoms should not come to work and self-isolate at home until they are no longer contagious in order to prevent the spread of illness.

3. I was not feeling well, went home, and met with my physician. I do not have flu and I returned to work. Now, my coworkers are expressing concern that I may be spreading illness at the office. What should I do?

Inform your supervisor or contact HR to discuss options and address your concerns.

4. Will I get paid for the day I get sent home?

If you have available sporadic absence or vacation time, you should get paid for the time you are out of the workplace. Union employees should refer to their collective bargaining agreements.

5. *Do I have to use my sporadic absence days to cover this time?*

You should use your sporadic absence days to cover time you are ill and out of the office.

6. *What will happen if I have no sporadic absence days available?*

In this situation, your options are to use accrued vacation, compelling reason, or optional holiday time, or take an unpaid leave. If you need to take the time as unpaid leave, please apply for medical leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Also, as a temporary change to the [sporadic absence policy](#) from September 1, 2009, to March 31, 2010, you may borrow up to eight sporadic absence days from your FY2011 sporadic absence day allocation with the following provisions:

1. Borrowing time is to be used only for absences from H1N1 or flu-like illness.
2. A maximum of four sporadic absence days can be used for each occurrence of H1N1 or flu-like illness.
3. No more than eight sporadic absence days can be borrowed during this period.
4. If you have more than 30 days of vacation accrued, you are expected to use that time before being advanced sporadic absence time.

7. *What if I do not want to go home?*

It is to your advantage and the advantage of your coworkers not to be in the office if you are ill. Due to the contagious nature of the flu and in consideration of the health and safety of the community, employees exhibiting flu-like symptoms are expected to act responsibly and cooperate with health guidelines by going home. Designated HR or DoF officials, in consultation with the Office of Employee Health and your supervisor, can require you to leave the workplace in order to reduce the spread of illness to others.

8. *My work will pile up if I am not here to do it. Can I work from home instead?*

Talk to your supervisor about the possibility of working from home. Your supervisor will consider this request and consult with HR or the DoF as appropriate.

Ultimately, it is your supervisor's decision whether or not to grant this request, based on operational needs.

9. *When do I become eligible for short-term disability? How do I file? What are the benefits?*

If you are a benefits-eligible employee absent from work for 8 or more full consecutive days, you may apply for short-term disability. To apply for short-term disability, you will need to complete the short-term disability application and have your treating physician complete the medical certificate within 3 weeks of your initial date of absence. All regular benefits-eligible employees will receive full base pay up to a maximum of 26 weeks for any one period of disability. Casual and biweekly employees on probation may receive the New Jersey State Temporary Disability rate, and Union employees pay may vary according to their Union contract. For more information please go to the Human Resources website at www.princeton.edu/hr/benefits/disability/std/ or contact Benefits at 609-258-3302 or benefits@princeton.edu.

10. *Do I need to have a doctor's note to return to work?*

You do not need a doctor's note to return to work, unless you are on short-term disability. If so, you must provide a medical certificate from your physician.

11. *Will my absence count against me on my performance review?*

Your absence from the workplace due to illness should not count against you on your performance review.

12. *My doctor says I can return to work and I have a note. However, I feel terrible. Can I stay home?*

If you are not feeling well enough to work, you can use one of your sporadic absence days to cover your absence. Notify your supervisor at the beginning of the day, or in accordance with your departmental guidelines, of your illness and impending absence.

13. *My children are sick with Flu. Can I leave work to care for them?*

If you must be absent from work to care for your children, notify your supervisor. As is the policy whenever an immediate family member is ill, you can use your sporadic absence days or vacation time to cover your absence. You might also wish to discuss the possibility of working from home temporarily with your supervisor. If

you are caring for sick children you may apply for medical leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

14. My children's school is closed because of flu illness. Can I stay at home?

If you must be absent from work to care for your children or for another immediate family member, notify your supervisor. As is the policy whenever an immediate family member is ill, you can use your sporadic absence days or vacation time to cover your absence. You might also wish to discuss the possibility of working from home temporarily with your supervisor.

15. I have a pre-existing medical condition. What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

Individuals with pre-existing medical conditions (i.e. pregnant women, adults with chronic medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes, or individuals with immunosuppression) may be at higher risk for complications from flu.

Employees with pre-existing medical conditions should immediately contact their personal physicians if they develop flu-like symptoms or have been exposed to someone with flu. Employees may want to discuss with their personal physician if it would be appropriate to start antiviral treatment for flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends that the following individuals with additional health concerns contact their health care provider about the antibacterial vaccine "Pneumovax," which can help prevent some complications of influenza: individuals who are 65 years and older; individuals with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma or diabetes; individuals with impaired immunity; and individuals who smoke cigarettes. For more information about this vaccine, visit the CDC website: www.flu.gov/vaccine/pneumococcal.html#TableUSACIP.

Questions about medical treatment should be directed to employees' personal physicians.

SUPERVISOR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. One of my employees is exhibiting flu-like symptoms. What should I do?

Ask the employee to leave the workplace, i.e., go home, and contact their personal physician. Recognize that the symptoms of H1N1 and flu-like illness are similar to a variety of other illnesses, such as allergies. Accordingly, you should proceed carefully and thoughtfully.

2. Can I send this employee to University Health Services (UHS)?

If an employee has flu-like symptoms, you should advise the employee to go home and contact their personal physician. Employees who do not have a personal physician and would like a list of physicians in the Princeton area should call Employee Health Services at (609) 258-5035 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

3. *An employee's coworkers are concerned that the employee might have H1N1. What should I do?*

If the employee is exhibiting flu-like symptoms, ask the employee to go home and contact her/his personal physician. If the employee is not exhibiting flu-like symptoms, you can let these coworkers know that the best way to minimize exposure to illness is by practicing good hygiene at all times, including covering their nose and mouth when they sneeze, washing their hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

4. *I have an employee who is absent from work and might have the flu. One of their coworkers has asked me why this employee is out. What should I say?*

You can tell the coworker that the employee does not feel well and is out of the office. However, you should not disclose anything specific about the employee's illness, even if you are aware of the employee's diagnosis. Under University policy and applicable law, health information about an individual is considered confidential and should not be disclosed to others.

5. *A coworker has said they cannot work near a formerly ill employee who has returned to work. What should I do?*

If it is possible to move the coworker to another location in the office, you may choose to do so, although you are not required to do so. You may also consider the possibility that the coworker might work from home for a limited period of time based on operational needs. You might also let the employee know that the best way to minimize exposure to illness is by practicing good hygiene at all times, including covering their nose and mouth when sneezing, washing their hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. You also can redirect the employee to the University's H1N1 or the CDC website to learn more about the contagiousness of flu.

6. *An ill employee has indicated they want to return to work. Is this OK?*

Ill employees may return to work after they have self-isolated at home and are no longer contagious. The guideline is to self-isolate during illness and for at least 24

hours after fever is gone (fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine). If the employee is unsure about whether they are no longer contagious, direct them to their personal physician for medical advice. If the employee is on short-term disability, the employee must provide a medical certificate from the employees' personal physician.

7. *Do I need to take special precautions once an ill employee returns to the workplace?*

If the ill employee has self-isolated as per the recommended guidelines and is no longer contagious, then they may return to work, and no special precautions are recommended for the office.

8. *I believe that one of my employees has returned prematurely to the workplace. What should I do?*

If the employee is still exhibiting flu-like symptoms, ask the employee to go home immediately and advise them to contact their personal physician.

9. *An ill employee's coworker has asked whether they can work at home because they fear exposure to flu. What should I say?*

If this is feasible based on operational needs, you may but are not required to allow the employee to work from home. Otherwise, let the employee know that the best way to minimize exposure to illness is by practicing good hygiene at all times, including covering their nose and mouth when sneezing, washing hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer, and avoiding touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.

10. *What do I say if someone asks if the University will be making our office germ-free?*

University Building Services already uses a hospital grade disinfectant, which is approved for and effective against any Type A virus such as the H1N1 flu. Cleaning of restrooms occurs daily, and cleaning staff members also conduct checks of restrooms throughout the day. At this time there is not an increased frequency of cleaning shared spaces, although staff is being diligent about disinfecting "frequently touched" surfaces.

Let employees know that the best way to minimize exposure to illness is by practicing good hygiene at all times, including covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze, washing your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

11. *An employee has said they cannot do their work because they do not want to touch anything previously touched by an ill employee. What should I do?*

The employee might wish to spray or wipe these surfaces with an anti-bacterial or similar product. You can also let the employee know that University Building Services already uses a hospital grade disinfectant, which is approved for and effective against any Type A virus such as the H1N1 flu, and that the best way to avoid exposure to germs is by washing their hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

COWORKER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. *Someone in my office just went home ill with flu-like symptoms, and we do not know if they have H1N1. I am afraid of getting sick. Can I go home? Can I work from home?*

If you are feeling ill, talk to your supervisor. Use sporadic absence days to cover absence from the workplace. If you are not ill and want to take time away from work, you can ask your supervisor to take vacation time. If you want to work at home, speak to your supervisor about whether that is feasible based on operational needs.

2. *A co-worker has gone home with flu-like symptoms. I am feeling well, but someone in my family has a compromised immune system and I now I fear that I may expose them to flu. What should I do?*

You can ask your supervisor if, based on operational needs, you can work in another location in the office or at home for a limited period of time.

3. *Will my personal workspace be sanitized?*

It is the responsibility of individual employees to clean their personal desks/workspaces. Employees may wish to use anti-bacterial or similar products in their work area if they are concerned about the spread of germs.

4. *My coworker looks ill. Should they be sent home?*

If you have a co-worker that appears to be ill, encourage the co-worker to notify your supervisor and/or you should notify your supervisor so the supervisor can determine whether the employee should be directed to go home in order to prevent the spread of illness to others.

5. *Our office is frequently visited by messengers, delivery people and other visitors. One of our visitors said they were ill. What should we do?*

You can ask the visitor to cover their nose and mouth if they are coughing or sneezing. You may wish to wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you have had contact with that person. If the visitor is a member of the University community (i.e. student, faculty or staff), you may want to remind them of the University's guidelines for staying home if they are ill, and direct them to the University's H1N1 web page for more information:

<http://web.princeton.edu/sites/emergency/swineflu/faq.html>.

6. *Can our office provide hand sanitizer?*

Ask your supervisor if your office can purchase hand sanitizer for the office.

7. *I do not want to touch equipment in the office that may be used by multiple people because I am concerned about the spread of germs. What should I do?*

You might wish to wipe down the equipment with an anti-bacterial or similar product. You might also wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently to minimize your exposure.

8. *Will the University provide masks to employees who have to work in a building where someone has been sick with flu symptoms?*

As a matter of policy, Building Services, Facilities and other staff are required to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (such as gloves or goggles) when cleaning or are at risk for exposure to hazardous materials.

Because information on the effectiveness of facemasks for the control of influenza in community settings is limited, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is currently encouraging individuals to practice good hygiene and take the normal precautions to prevent the spread of germs. The University would follow the direction of state and federal health officials in the event that this guidance changed and masks were recommended to prevent the spread of influenza.

Should individual staff members choose to purchase a facemask, masks cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use as medical devices have been determined to help protect penetration of blood and body fluids. This includes facemasks labeled as surgical, dental, medical procedure, isolation or laser masks, and these typically are available for purchase at local pharmacies, supermarkets or hardware stores.

9. *Doesn't my supervisor have a responsibility to let everyone know about an employee in our office who has been diagnosed with H1N1 or flu-like illness? There are other people*

on my floor who have medical conditions that may put them at risk if they were exposed to flu.

Personal health information is confidential and the University is not able to share diagnosis information of individuals. However, we understand the concerns of members of the University community and encourage employees concerned about their work environment to immediately speak with their supervisor. The University is taking a range of steps to reduce the spread of illness on campus and inform members of our community about the latest health policies and guidance. For more information, visit the University's H1N1 web page:

<http://web.princeton.edu/sites/emergency/swineflu/faq.html>.