



Frequently Asked Questions for Managers (FAQs)

Health and the Workplace

1. How does swine Influenza A(H1N1) differ from ordinary seasonal flu?

H1N1 is very similar to seasonal flu in terms of the symptoms it causes in most people. They tend to be mild, and illness generally lasts only a few days to a week. It is different from seasonal flu in that this particular H1N1 swine Influenza strain has not been seen before.

2. How should I advise my staff if they are sick with the flu?

Employees diagnosed with influenza or influenza-like illness (ILI) should be instructed to remain at home until 24 hours after they are without symptoms (fever greater than 100.4 F, cough, muscle aches, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting). This will prevent inadvertent spread of the influenza virus to their coworkers.

3. Are there any special recommendations for staff with chronic health conditions?

Yes. Employees who are pregnant or have high-risk health conditions (for example, asthma, heart disease or diabetes) should be aware they may be at risk of developing severe influenza. Therefore they should be instructed to contact their medical provider for guidance immediately, if they develop symptoms suggestive of influenza.

4. Are there any special recommendations for disinfecting the workplace?

No. Employees who have particular concerns about work areas used by an employee who has been diagnosed with influenza should be reassured that no additional cleaning procedures are necessary. Work areas are considered safe. Routine cleaning services, as provided by Facilities, are sufficient.

5. Are masks or gloves necessary?

No. There are currently no public health recommendations for employees working in non-healthcare settings to wear either a mask or surgical gloves for personal protection from the influenza virus. Employees working in healthcare settings should seek guidance regarding this question from their supervisor.

6. What if an employee has a household member with influenza or ILI?

Employees who have a family member or others residing in their home with influenza, but who have no symptoms of influenza, are expected to come to work as scheduled. If the employee develops symptoms they are expected to notify their supervisor or HR representative immediately.

7. What are the typical symptoms of the flu or ILI?

Symptoms suggestive of the influenza may include fever (oral temperature greater than 100.4 F), cough, muscle aches and abdominal symptoms such as pain, nausea and vomiting.

8. Is there anything different about the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

No. In most people, H1N1 flu is causing mild symptoms similar to those of seasonal flu. Of the cases of H1N1 flu seen in New York City so far, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) has reported that fever and cough are the most common.

9. Is the University planning to have medications (“antivirals”) on hand for employees?

No. Based on workplace recommendations from the NYCDOHMH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, stockpiling medications like Tamiflu® (oseltamivir) and Relenza® (zanamivir) is not advised for educational institutions.

University Policy and Procedures

The primary impact of H1N1 flu will be on employee attendance. Absenteeism may relate to illness, fear of exposure, caring for ill family members, and school and/or daycare closures. Departments should plan to be as flexible as possible to enable all employees to work and maintain operations to the extent possible, including facilitating work from remote locations, flexible work schedules and alternate work assignments.

Listed below are frequently asked questions from managers:

1. What if an employee calls in sick due to having flu-like symptoms or H1N1 flu?

If an employee reports flu-like symptoms and calls in sick, the manager should record the event just as any other absence related to an employee's illness. The manager should follow the department's standard attendance reporting procedures for sick time and medical documentation requirements.

If the employee's illness exceeds (or is expected to exceed) seven calendar days, the manager should consult with their department HR representative or HR Client Manager for the next steps related to a Medical Leave of Absence.

In addition to the above options, the employee may be eligible for FMLA leave for his or her own serious illness. Please be advised that there are eligibility requirements that must be met. Please review the FMLA policy and consult with your HR Client Manager.

2. What if an employee reports that they have to care for a family member who has flu-like symptoms or who has H1N1 flu?

If an employee reports that a family member living in his or her household has flu-like symptoms, or has been diagnosed with H1N1, the employee has several options:

- If the employee is covered by a collective bargaining agreement, he or she may take accrued sick days to care for a sick family member. Managers must review the benefit and eligibility requirements as described in the employee's union contract.
- If the employee is a non union support staff or officer, he or she may use accrued personal days or vacation days to care for a sick family member.
- The employee may also request a flexible work arrangement such as flex time and/or telecommuting. Please review the Flexible Work Arrangements policy for eligibility requirements. Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement should refer to their respective union contract.

If an employee does not have adequate accrued paid time off to take care of a family member's illness, please contact your HR client manager, who can help consider options.

In addition to the above options, the employee may be eligible for FMLA leave to care for a sick family member. Please be advised that there are eligibility requirements that must be met. Please review the FMLA policy and consult with your HR Client Manager.

Managers and HR Representatives are encouraged to contact their HR Client Manager for assistance in determining the best option to manage the employee's attendance and/or leave of absence.

3. What if an employee or family member wants to get more information about H1N1 flu?

The University has created an informational website that is updated regularly. The website includes information on prevention and hygiene as well as additional informational resources: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/studentservices/preparedness/index.html>

4. What if a manager wants more specific guidance on an issue related to employees and H1N1 flu?

Managers are strongly encouraged to consult with their HR Client Manager for any issues or concerns related to employees, the workplace and H1N1. You may reach your Client Manager

directly or contact the Office of Employment and HR Client Services at **212-851-7008**, or CUMC Human Resources at **212-305-3819**.

5. What if an employee has concerns about someone in their department displaying flu-like symptoms?

The employee should express their concern to their manager, who will follow the guidance outlined in this communication.

Listed below are policies to consider:

Policy Title	Who is covered?	Policy Link
Medical Leave of Absence for Officers of Administration (Salary Continuation)	Officers of Administration	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual/time-away-work#401
Medical Leave of Absence for Non Union Support Staff	Non Union Support Staff	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual/time-away-work#support-staff
Sick Days	Employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement	http://hr.columbia.edu/union-contracts
NYS Disability	All employees	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual/time-away-work#409
Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	All employees	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/fmla
Vacation Days	Officers of Administration and Non Union Support Staff	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual/time-away-work#401
Personal Days	Officers of Administration and Non Union Support Staff	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/hr-manual/time-away-work#support-staff
Flexible Work Arrangements	Officers of Administration and Non Union Support Staff	http://hr.columbia.edu/policies/fwa