

H1N1 – Cold – Flu Q&A for Residence Hall Students

Q. Should students attend class if they have the flu?

A. Students with flu-like symptoms should not go to class. They should email their professors to inform them of their illness. To promote student success and to help prevent the spread of the virus, the University has asked that faculty announce their expectations for students who report off ill. Such expectations could require absent students to:

- follow the class attendance policy;
- make up any work missed; and
- inform professors of an absence before missing a class, assignment or test, and that this notification should come via e-mail, so that it can be documented.

Q. Is there a threat to the residence hall general population?

A. Typically, H1N1 flu is not presenting more severely than annual seasonal flu. The residence halls are not at any increased threat; however, students are in closer contact with each other than in other areas of our university community. They have more opportunity to spread this virus, so they need to be extra diligent with washing their hands and covering their noses and mouths when they cough or sneeze.

Students with ill roommates can still share a room but must be extremely diligent in hand washing, distancing themselves as much as they can from ill roommates, wiping down all surfaces daily with sanitizing wipes, and asking those that are coughing to contain it with a tissue or their sleeve.

We encourage social distancing during a flu outbreak. Room changes do not help prevent or protect the students from contracting a cold or flu. Students should:

- ✓ Limit unnecessary trips to grocery stores, malls and other crowded places;
- ✓ Keep space between you and others when using public transportation or studying in the library;
- ✓ Reduce social contacts and community activities;
- ✓ Stay away from others as much as possible for 24 hours after your fever has ended without the aid of medications in order to not be contagious;
- ✓ Consider recuperating at home, if possible.

Q. Why isn't UA sending sick students home?

A. We encourage students with the flu who can arrange safe, private transportation to go home because they will likely feel more comfortable returning home to recover.

Q. What should I do if my roommate/suitemate has the virus?

A. Living in a residence hall is considered a “homelike” living situation by public health officials. It is likely you will encounter others on your floor, in your building or possibly in your room or other shared space who contract the virus. You should follow the precautions listed regarding protecting yourself on a regular basis. In addition, you may want to bring some alcohol based wipes to campus with you to use in bathroom areas, sinks, etc. if you are sharing with someone who is sick. Wiping down these areas before use is effective in killing flu viruses. Our custodial staff has increased their cleaning activities in high traffic areas including common bathrooms, lobbies and all other common areas.

Q. Why can't students move to another room if their roommate is sick?

A. Room changes neither protect nor prevent flu transmission. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the rate of secondary infections in households is 15-20 percent. Students living in residence halls are encouraged to practice good hygiene in order to limit their exposure, including regularly washing hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer. They should avoid close contact with their roommates.

Q. How can sick students living in residence halls get food?

A. Students who are ill can contact Dining Services at 330-972-5592 to request their meal be delivered to their room. There are also "flu kits" available upon request from Dining Services.

Q. How is H1N1 influenza treated?

A. In the majority of people, H1N1 flu, like most viral illnesses, is self limited, meaning that a person's immune system will adequately combat the infection. Healthy patients with uncomplicated illness need not be treated with antivirals, and such treatment is not recommended by the CDC or the World Health Organization (WHO). Treatment with antiviral medications is recommended for patients who are hospitalized or at higher risk for influenza complications. Symptomatic medications are helpful in controlling influenza symptoms such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve) for fever, guaifenesin (Robitussin) for cough and decongestants (Sudafed) for nasal congestion. Rest and good hydration also help with recovery.

Q. Why are students with the virus not hospitalized?

A. Generally, those who develop H1N1 flu experience an illness similar to a seasonal flu. Most cases are relatively mild. The vast majority of people with this type of flu recover uneventfully, generally in about five days.

Q. What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

A. The best defense against all flu viruses continues to be good hygiene practices including frequent hand washing, cleaning of hard surfaces more often than usual, sneezing into your sleeve, covering coughs and avoiding unnecessary close contact with individuals who are symptomatic.

Q. How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

A. Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

Q. What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

A. Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. Contamination can be significantly reduced by regular handwashing and the use of alcohol-based cleansers for surface cleaning.

Q. What kills influenza virus?

A. Several chemical germicides including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics) and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses.