



Information about H1N1 Flu

(Adapted from CDC.gov)

H1N1 has received worldwide attention. We want you to know that we are treating this situation seriously and are following medical protocols for students' safe participation in our programs. As of this time, the H1N1 affected areas does not warrant any program changes, alterations, or cancellation. If the situation should change, all program participants, parents and home institutions will be notified. This handout provides factual information on the concerns related to the H1N1 flu.

The SIT Study Abroad office in Vermont is in regular contact with the local academic directors and other program staff to gather information about how the situation could impact your program. During the orientation period, the academic director will discuss appropriate prevention methods with you, our staff, and homestay families to limit potential exposure. In addition, please review the CDC guidelines for HINI virus precautions here: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>

We will continue to monitor the situation and issues updates as needed. Please know that SIT is committed to its mission of helping students to understand the issues and realities of countries and cultures different from their own. Please do not hesitate to call our Brattleboro-based staff at 888-272-7881 if you have any questions.

What is 2009 H1N1?

2009 H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. Since April 2009, the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus has been spreading from person-to-person worldwide, affecting all racial and ethnic groups. This virus appears to be transmitted from person-to person through close contact in ways similar to the seasonal influenza viruses.

Why is 2009 H1N1 virus sometimes called "swine flu"?

This virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and avian genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where people have been identified with novel H1N1 flu and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people. Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

Before you travel: please read these guidelines from CDC on how to stay healthy on your study abroad program <http://www.cdc.gov/features/StudyAbroad/>

What you can do to stay healthy. Recommendations for H1N1 flu precautions:

- **Obtain the H1N1 vaccine:** CDC recommends the H1N1 vaccine in addition to the influenza vaccine as the most important steps in protecting against the flu.
- **Take these everyday steps to protect your health:**
 - Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - Stay home if you are sick for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.
- **Follow public health advice** regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- **Stay Informed:** this website <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> will be updated regularly as information becomes available. You can also call 1-800-CDC-INFO for more information.

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with novel H1N1 flu virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. During the current outbreak, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs during is to treat severe influenza illness.

What to travel with:

First Aid kit and medical supplies,
Oral thermometer and probe covers
Household disinfectant & Alcohol-based wipes/hand sanitizer
Disposable gloves and plastic storage bags,
Masks