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Checklist: Action Plan for H1N1 (“swine flu”)

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Symptoms and care. Like many viruses, H1N1 (“swine flu”) enters the body through the mouth and nose. Symptoms of H1N1 include headache, cough, and a high fever. Sore throat and generalized pain throughout the body are also common. Contact a primary care physician within 48 hours of onset. If possible, avoid emergency rooms: patients who have H1N1 may pass it on to those who don’t.

Action Plan Checklist. Develop an H1N1 action plan for those you are responsible for as soon as possible. Here are three critical elements that should be included in your action plan.

_____ **Individual prevention kits.** Each kit should have masks, gloves and an alcohol-based sanitizer liquid such as Purel and Germex. Masks and gloves help deny the virus access to the mouth and nasal passages. The alcohol in the sanitizer acts as a desiccant, depriving the virus of the moisture it thrives in.

_____ **Policies and procedures.** These should establish the responsibilities and course of action for those who:

- (a) are actively sick;
- (b) have had contact with active cases; and
- (c) have visited places with low but verifiable risk

_____ **Access to a primary care physician.** Expect that, as when the “sentinel” virus struck last spring, emergency rooms will be crowded—and should be avoided anyway. A physician should be available to review the symptoms and recommend treatment. Often treatment involves prescription drugs such as Tamiflu and Relenza.

Limiting risk. As much as possible, keep living and working areas well ventilated. Be proactive: wash hands and face frequently and wear a mask, especially if around those who have had or have been exposed to those with swine flu, or if in crowded or poorly ventilated areas.

Questions? Feel free to e-mail WorldClinic at swineflu@worldclinic.com.