

Department of Health and Children and Department of Foreign Affairs

August 20th

TRAVEL ADVISORY RELATING TO THE PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 OUTBREAK

This advice is current on August 20th. The advice will be updated in response to advice from the National Pandemic Influenza Expert Group and the World Health Organisation. Please keep updated by rechecking this advice.

Travel advice to affected areas

The WHO do not recommend any restrictions on international travel as their expert guidance is that such restrictions are ineffective in limiting spread of the virus.

Our current advice is that we do not recommend Irish citizens postpone elective or non-essential travel to any area.

This advice is not changed by the WHO decision to declare the current Influenza outbreak a global pandemic. People who intend to travel to affected areas are advised to consult the WHO website <http://www.who.int/en/> for updates.

We recommend that travellers at risk of complications from influenza should discuss the risk of travel to affected areas with their health care provider before deciding on travel. People at risk of complications include those with chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease; people whose immune system is reduced by disease or medications; people with diabetes; people aged 65 years and older; children under 5 (children under 2 are at particular risk of influenza); people on medication for asthma, severely obese people (body mass index more than 40) and pregnant women.

Human Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 symptoms:

The symptoms are like those of regular seasonal flu and include:

fever of sudden onset, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache and muscle aches. Some people have vomiting and diarrhoea. In severe cases, pneumonia may develop and death may occur.

Travel precautions going to an affected area:

- Familiarise yourself with sources of health advice in the country of travel, and pay attention to local government and public health announcements including any movement restrictions and prevention recommendations.
- Avoid close contact with people who have fever, sneezing or cough.
- General advice includes frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and water, or alcohol based hand cleaners, particularly after sneezing or coughing.
- If you are sick, avoid close contact with others, stay at home or in your hotel room.
- If you have a mild flu-like illness seek medical advice over the phone if practical.
- Seek medical care if severely ill or in a risk group of complications from influenza. Antiviral medications can be prescribed for the treatment of influenza.
- Do not travel or fly home if you are ill.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing, sneezing or wiping and dispose of tissues into a bin immediately.
- If you are caring for someone who is ill, try to ensure they are not in close contact with others. Wearing a mask may be protective, for those who are caring for someone with influenza.

Actions if someone develops a flu-like illness in an affected area:

If you get sick with a flu-like illness as described above, and are travelling in an affected area you should make contact with the local health services by telephone. They will decide if you need testing or treatment.

Precautions for travellers upon return from affected areas:

Travellers returning from affected areas should observe their personal health and if, within 7 days after return, they experience an illness like that described above they should stay at home and immediately contact their GP/family doctor. If you become ill during a flight you should inform the cabin crew.

For further information:

<http://www.dohc.ie/>

<http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/>

<http://www.hse.ie/eng/>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

<http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/>