

**Department of Health and Children and Department of
Foreign Affairs**

May 20th

**NEW TRAVEL ADVISORY RELATING TO THE INFLUENZA
A(H1N1) OUTBREAK**

This advice is current on May 20th and has changed from previous advisories. As the situation may change over time the advice will be updated in response to advice from the pandemic influenza expert group and the World Health Organisation. Please keep updated by rechecking this advice. The WHO have changed the name of the circulating virus to A(H1N1).

Travel advice to Mexico and other affected areas

The number of reported confirmed cases of H1N1 Flu Virus in Mexico steadily increased until the end of April at which time it began to decrease and then level off at a lower level.

After discussion with members of the National Pandemic Expert Group, the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) has decided to change the current advice to those considering travel to affected areas.

Our National Public Health Emergency Team has reviewed the latest information from Mexico on influenza spread and considers that the risk of contracting the virus has decreased. It has also taken into account that nearly all of the cases reported in Canada and the United States have been mild. For these reasons:

Our current advice has been changed and we no longer recommend Irish citizens postpone elective or non-essential travel to Mexico or other affected areas.

This position will be kept under review. 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 any form of influenza such as those with chronic conditions (for example diabetes, lung disease, heart disease), elderly, pregnant women or children under 2 years of age, discuss the risk of travel to affected areas with their health care provider before deciding on travel.

Human influenza A (H1N1) 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. 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.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/>