



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Frequently Asked Questions about the H1N1 Influenza: A Resource for Georgetown University Employees

What is H1N1 influenza?

H1N1 (“swine”) flu is a new influenza virus that was first detected in people in the United States and Mexico in the Spring of 2009. The H1N1 flu virus spreads from person-to-person, much like regular seasonal influenza does every year. Both seasonal influenza and the current H1N1 flu can vary in severity from mild to severe, but most cases of H1N1 influenza have been generally mild. If you contract influenza, you will probably be ill for several days with fevers, achiness, and respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, nasal congestion). Some people may also have diarrhea and vomiting.

Who is at risk?

Both with seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu, certain individuals are at high risk of serious complications. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), this novel H1N1 flu has caused greater disease burden in people younger than 25 years of age than older people. However, pregnancy and other previously recognized high risk medical conditions from seasonal influenza appear to be associated with increased risk of complications from this novel H1N1. These underlying conditions include asthma, diabetes, suppressed immune systems, heart disease, kidney disease, neurocognitive, and neuromuscular disorders.

Is there a vaccine for H1N1?

Currently, there is no vaccine to protect against the H1N1 flu, but a vaccine is in production and health officials hope to have it ready for the public in the fall. Georgetown is working closely with the District of Columbia’s Department of Public Health to develop a plan for the distribution of the H1N1 vaccine if and when one becomes available.

There is a vaccine for the seasonal flu, and it will be available on campus later this fall. The vaccine for seasonal flu will be free to Georgetown University students, faculty and staff, and we will alert you when you can receive it.

What is Georgetown University doing to prevent the potential spread of the H1N1 virus?

The university is taking extra steps to minimize the potential spread of the H1N1 flu and seasonal flu viruses. Student residence halls are being cleaned with a specific focus on common areas and high contact surfaces such as bathrooms, doorknobs, and handrails. Common gathering areas including Yates Field House, McDonough Arena, and the Leavey Center will also be cleaned regularly, as well as bathrooms and high contact surfaces in academic and administrative buildings. If faculty or staff members are aware of specific areas that need to be cleaned, they can call Facilities Management at (202) 687-3432.

We are urging everyone to wash their hands frequently and we are providing hand sanitizing stations across campus for everyone to use.

We've also established a H1N1 advice line for members of the Georgetown community who have questions or need more information about the flu. Faculty and staff are encouraged to talk to their personal healthcare provider for specific questions about their own health. They should talk to their supervisor about any workplace concerns related to H1N1 flu. Faculty and staff can call the advice line at (202) 784-H1N1 (4161) for general workplace issues. Additional information can be found at the university's H1N1 website (<http://preparedness.georgetown.edu/h1n1.html>)

What can I do to prevent the flu?

The most important measures to avoid the flu are:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. The use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer is an appropriate alternative.
- Always cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and immediately throw the tissue away in a proper receptacle. As an alternative, cough or sneeze into the inside of the elbow.

For more information about how you can prevent the flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control H1N1 website (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>).

What should I do if I am ill and think I might have H1N1 Influenza?

First, familiarize yourself with the symptoms H1N1 Influenza. These include fever with body aches, cough, sore throat, and in some cases gastrointestinal upset. Visit GU's H1N1 Information page at <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu/swineflu.html> or the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> to obtain more information about the H1N1 influenza virus.

If you have these symptoms you should not come to work and should consult your personal physician or contact the nurse line associated with your current health plan.

CareFirst: FirstHelp Nurse Line, (800)-535-9700

Kaiser: Advice Nurse, (703) 359-7878 (DC); (800) 777-7904 (outside of DC)

UnitedHealthcare: Nurseline (800) 846-4678

All of these nurse lines are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and have up-to-date information on the H1N1 flu.

As with any absence, you should promptly notify your supervisor that you will not be at work and the reason for the absence. You must also keep your supervisor informed of your condition or situation and your anticipated return to work date.

What if I become ill, and am unable to contact my supervisor?

It's very important to keep your supervisor informed. If you are unable to contact your supervisor because you are incapacitated or caring for an incapacitated family member, please ask another family member or a friend to contact your supervisor as soon as possible.

What type of leave is available to me in the case of this H1N1 influenza outbreak or pandemic?

All current available forms of leave may be considered for use in the event of an influenza outbreak or pandemic. In accordance with University Policy # 602, staff employees are entitled to use paid leave for their own illness, illness of a family member and/or for personal reasons.. Additionally, staff employees who have banked sick leave hours may use them for their own illness or to care for ill family members (See HR Policy #605). Employees represented by SEIU have sick and vacation leave. In accordance with the Agreement between Georgetown and SEIU, employees would use accrued sick leave.

Is the University considering any additional special types of leave?

If you do not have enough paid leave, sick leave or vacation leave to cover the period of time you are absent because of your own illness related to the H1N1 flu or to take care of a family member who has the H1N1 flu, or to take care of children who are no longer able to go to their regular child care or school, you may borrow against future leave earnings up to 7 working days to cover your time away.

When I return to work, will I be required to present a medical certificate?

If you were absent from work with flu like symptoms, you will not be required to present a medical certificate.

What if I'm not sick, but I need to stay at home to care for my child or spouse who has the flu?

All employees, particularly “Essential Employees”, are advised to develop contingency plans to meet their work obligations should family members become sick and need to be cared for. Employees who are designated as “Essential” must inform their supervisor, in advance, of personal situations that could impact their ability to perform their essential functions. Supervisors are asked to be flexible in responding to situations to help employees balance family and work obligations.

I’m not ill nor are my children, but their school district or day care is closed and I have no one to watch them. What should I do?

See answer above. All employees, particularly “Essential Employees”, are advised to develop contingency plans to meet their work obligations should family members become sick and need to be cared for. Employees who are designated as “Essential” must inform their supervisor, in advance, of personal situations that could impact their ability to perform their essential functions. Supervisors are asked to be flexible in responding to situations to help employees balance family and work obligations.

If I don’t have enough leave to cover my absence from work due to the influenza outbreak or pandemic, how can I afford to stay at home until I am completely well before returning to work?

It is very important that you do not return to work until your fever has subsided for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications. For more information about the H1N1 virus and its symptoms, visit Georgetown’s H1N1 Information page at <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu/swineflu.html> or the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>. You can also call Georgetown’s H1N1 advice line at (202) 784-H1N1 (4161) for more information.

If you do not have enough paid leave or sick leave to cover the period of time you are absent because of your own illness related to the H1N1 flu or to take care of a family member who has the H1N1 flu , you may borrow against future leave earnings up to 7 working days to cover your time away.

If I am out from work because I have to care for my child or spouse, but I am not sick and my circumstances permit me to work, can I work from home?

You may be able to work from home, with the approval of your supervisor. Check with your supervisor to determine if your job duties are such that your work could be done from home in the short-term.

For more information about this, please read the **Interim Workplace Guidelines for Georgetown University for the 2009-2010 Academic Year** on Georgetown's H1N1 Information page at <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu/swineflu.html>.

If I become sick at work can my supervisor make me leave work?

Yes. Because persons who become ill with the symptoms of influenza should immediately minimize contact with others to avoid transmission of the disease, your supervisor can send you home. Supervisors can call their HR Generalist or the Georgetown's H1N1 advice line at (202) 784-H1N1 (4161) for more information on when they might consider sending an employee home.

What if I'm not sick, but do not want to come to work for fear of becoming ill. Is my supervisor required to approve my vacation leave request?

It is important to educate yourself about the H1N1 virus and its transmission. Visit Georgetown's H1N1 Information page at <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu/swineflu.html> or the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>, or call Georgetown's H1N1 advice line at (202) 784-H1N1 (4161) for more information.

You may request to take paid time off for personal reasons. However, your supervisor is not required to approve your leave request.

During this H1N1 influenza outbreak and possible pandemic, under what circumstances could my supervisor cancel vacation leave requests that have already been approved?

Should the situation become urgent enough to require heightened measures, your supervisor may cancel any pre-approved paid time off leave requests, especially in circumstances where there are serious staff shortages as a result of illness. Your time off also could be cancelled if your job is considered an essential service position. .

For more information about this, please read the **Interim Workplace Guidelines for Georgetown University for the 2009-2010 Academic Year** on Georgetown's H1N1 Information page at <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu/swineflu.html>.

What if I use public transportation to travel to and from work, and, due to the influenza outbreak or pandemic, the public transit system shuts down and I am unable to get to work. Will I get paid for the day(s) I am unable to get to work?

It is important to plan ahead for this situation and look for other ways to travel to work. You may be able to ride-share with other employees. Your supervisor may be able to help you find

other employees who live in your area. If you are unable to obtain any other transportation you will need to discuss the situation with your supervisor. Your supervisor will consult with Human Resources to determine the best course of action. Consideration will be given to each employee's individual situation.

If the city or the federal government orders the University closed, will everything be closed like a snow day?

In the unlikely event of a partial or full-closure of the university, essential services will be needed. Due to the unusual circumstances surrounding the H1N1 influenza outbreak and possible pandemic, more employees than usual may be designated as "Essential" You will be notified by your supervisor if your job is considered an essential function during this potential crisis or if you will be assigned elsewhere. Keep in mind that this is an evolving situation that may change quickly and change the need for your continuing services during the emergency.

I plan to take a personal trip to an area where the University has placed a ban on business travel? Can I go? Will I be able to return to work when I get back?

First, inform your supervisor of your plans. If you travel to an area where the University has placed a ban on business travel you will be required to present a medical certificate stating that you are not sick prior to being allowed to return to work. You may also talk to you supervisor about the possibility of working from home, with the approval of your supervisor. Check with your supervisor to determine if your job duties are such that your work could be done from home in the short-term. For more information about Georgetown University's travel policies, visit: <http://travel.georgetown.edu/36060.html>

Will my supervisor approve my request to work from home if there is an influenza outbreak or pandemic outbreak?

It really depends on the nature of your work. Some positions are not suited for working from home due to specific job duties that cannot be performed at home or there may be data security reasons that will preclude your supervisor from approving a request to work from home, so some requests might be denied.

Can my supervisor schedule me to work hours or shifts that I normally do not work?

You may be asked to work more hours or different hours than normal or be reassigned within your department or to a different department, especially if your position is considered an essential service position, the university is short-staffed as a result of the influenza outbreak or new services are required to respond to the influenza outbreak. However, the university will always follow all applicable state and federal laws as they relate to wages and hours.

If there are large numbers of employees who are unable to come to work because of the influenza outbreak, can I be asked to work overtime hours?

In the event of a serious outbreak, we all may be needed to work differently to ensure the university continues to function and our students are supported. You may be asked to work more hours or different hours than normal, especially if your position is considered an essential service position, or the university is short-staffed as a result of the influenza outbreak. However, the university will honor all applicable state and federal laws as they relate to wages and hours.

Should a significant influenza outbreak strike GU, what assistance will be available to help me cope with its impact emotionally?

GU provides resources to help employees and eligible dependents cope with these types of life events through its Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) please call (202) 687-2400 during normal working hours. The FSAP provides free, confidential, short-term counseling.

If I become sick at work can my supervisor make me leave work?

Yes. Because persons who become ill with the symptoms of influenza should immediately minimize contact with others to avoid transmission of the disease, your supervisor can send you home. Supervisors can call their HR Generalist or the Georgetown's H1N1 advice line at (202) 784-H1N1 (4161) for more information on when they might consider sending an employee home.

If you are ill and have to leave work you should not take mass transit to include GUTS. If you are not able to drive yourself home, you should arrange for a ride through a family member, friend, or colleague or via private car (such as a taxi)

If you must remain at work temporarily while waiting for a ride, you should self-isolate in an office or other private space. If you will be near others prior to leaving work, or as you leave work, you should wear a mask or cover your mouth with a tissue. If you will be driven home by someone, you should wear a mask or cover your mouth with a tissue and sit in the back seat away from the driver

Who should wear masks?

In most instances, facemasks are unnecessary.

A mask should be worn only by an employee: exhibiting influenza-like symptoms AND staying at work for a period of time while waiting to go home AND in an area with contact with others; OR with underlying health issues (including asthma, lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, neurocognitive and neuromuscular disorders, suppressed immune systems, and pregnancy) AND who must come in contact with someone with influenza-like illness.

An employee who is exhibiting influenza-like symptoms who works in a private office and is able to leave work on his or her own by car, and who will not have contact with anyone between the office and the car, does not need to wear a mask and should not wear a mask.

How do I get a mask if I need one, based on the criteria above?

During regular business hours, call the University's H1N1 information line at 202-784-H1N1 (6141). If after hours, call DPS at 202-687-4343. Your supervisor or a colleague should get the mask for you.