



## Epidemiology Unit

### Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **Pandemic Influenza (H1N1) 2009 Outbreak**

A number of students from a few schools in the country had been confirmed as positive for Pandemic H1N1 Influenza within the last 3 days indicating wide spread community transmission within the country. Since the first reported case of the disease in the country in early June there had been 110 confirmed cases of Pandemic H1N1 Influenza by 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and the vast majority of these either had contracted the disease from overseas (88%) or has had contact with confirmed cases (12%).

With the of community transmission within the country the strategies that had been earlier adopted to delay the disease from establishing within the community will now be changed to strategies to minimize the impact of the disease similar to those adopted in other countries affected.

These strategies are based on the scientifically proven fact that **this disease is generally a mild illness** similar to seasonal flu'. Its symptoms usually include fever, runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, cough, headache and muscle or joint pains. They may last for a few days up to a week and may not require specific anti viral treatment.

Therefore the following key strategies would be adopted:

1. All patients with suspected H1N1 influenza attending to hospitals will be screened to assess their illness and only patients with severe or progressive symptoms will be admitted to hospitals for laboratory diagnosis and treatment with anti virals.
2. Those with mild illness would be managed as out patients with supportive medication and proper advice.
3. Medical Research Institute (MRI) will continue to process the samples for laboratory diagnosis on requests by physicians attending to hospitalized patients.
4. Screening presently conducted at the Bandaranaike International Airport would be suspended once the community transmission has been identified as sustained.

Ministry of Health assures the public that Pandemic H1N1 Influenza outbreak in the country would be handled by the health care authorities under the stipulated guidelines laid down by the global authorities and urges the public to avoid undue panic and fear which would hinder the effectiveness of these measures and exhaust the available resources.

### Managing H1N1 Influenza at Home

- Take supportive medication as prescribed e.g. non aspirin drugs for fever, anti allergic drugs for sneezing and runny nose and antibiotics for a possible bacterial infection
- Stay away from work/school and other public places and crowded settings for either seven days after onset of symptoms, or until 24 hours after symptoms subside-whichever is longer
- Take bed rest
- Take plenty of liquids
- Maintain a good diet
- Avoid close contact with family members and wear a face mask or a clean handkerchief/cloth over nose and mouth at such occasions
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water and specially after touching face
- Cough and sneeze into the elbow or into a handkerchief (this should either be disposed safely or washed with soap and water when wet)
- Seek medical attention urgently if the symptoms get worse or develop any of the danger signs (e.g. severe weakness, unconsciousness, convulsions, severe difficulty in breathing, high fever, inability to drink fluids)

**Note:** Those with the following conditions who are considered as at higher risk for complications of H1N1 Influenza should seek prompt medical attention if their symptoms worsen:

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years and older
- Pregnant women
- People with certain chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions such as chronic lung (including asthma), cardiovascular (excluding hypertension), renal, hepatic, haematological (including sickle cell disease), metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus), immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV, those with disorders that can compromise respiratory function e.g. spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy

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