

MEDIA RELEASE

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FEDHASA CAPE URGES MEMBERS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS WITH GUESTS AND STAFF IN VIEW OF PANDEMIC H1N1 INFLUENZA VIRUS

FEDHASA Cape Chairperson Phillip Couvaras comes out in support of an e-mail doing the rounds regarding pandemic H1N1 influenza virus precautions. The origins of the e-mail emanate from the University of Stellenbosch's Centre for Infectious Diseases, which quotes largely from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases' Revised Health Workers Handbook on Pandemic Influenza A (H1N1) 2009 "Swine 'Flu".

"In light of the current threat of pandemic H1N1 influenza virus around Cape Town, FEDHASA Cape recommends the industry adopt practices that ensure a high level of sanitation at all times, in order to minimize the possible outbreak or spread of infection. Hoteliers should stay informed and develop strategies and precautionary measures that protect the health and safety of employees and guests," he says. "As has been the case during previous health scares, it is important to "be prepared, but not to panic."

He hastens to add that, to date, there have been no reported cases of swine influenza found in any South African hotels.

In order to minimise transmission of this and any disease, FEDHASA Cape is recommending that employers act responsibly and engage in factual communication with employees.

"It is ideal to encourage frequent hand washing, minimised touching of one's nose and mouth, and immediate discarding of any tissues used for coughing," he says. "Employees who exhibit 'flu-like symptoms should not report to work. They should stay home, minimising contact with others, and if 'flu-like symptoms persist or worsen, medical treatment should be sought."

The pandemic H1N1 influenza virus is a communicable disease, with the following key actions advocated:

- Wash hands or clean them with alcohol-based hand rubs frequently, especially after one coughs or sneezes, or before one eats.
- Cover one's nose and mouth with a clean tissue when coughing or sneezing, and throw the tissue in a rubbish bin immediately after being used.
- Alternatively, cough and sneeze into one's sleeve.
- Avoid touching one's eyes, nose or mouth, as one could infect oneself that way.
- Limit close (1 to 2 meter) contact with people who are sick with 'flu-like symptoms.

- Returning travellers who fall ill should seek medical care immediately

"Symptoms for an influenza-like illness are the same for pandemic and seasonal influenza," says Couvaras. Typical symptoms include a sudden onset of high fever, cough, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, headache, body aches, chills, tiredness, and lack of appetite. Some of those affected have reported nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Emergency care must immediately be sought in the following instances:

CHILDREN

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or grey skin colour
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

ADULTS

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- If 'flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Useful websites:

- ICAO

<http://www.icao.int/icao/en/med/guidelines.htm>

- WHO

[http://www.who.int/ihr/travel/A\(H1N1\)_air_transport_guidance.pdf](http://www.who.int/ihr/travel/A(H1N1)_air_transport_guidance.pdf)

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/hygiene/ships/guide_hygiene

- United Nations

<http://www.un-influenza.org/>

- UN World Tourism Organization

<http://www.sos.travel/>

- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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

- International Air Transport Association

<http://www.iata.org/index.htm>

- Airports Council International

http://www.airports.org/cda/aci_common/display/main/aci_content07.jsp?zn=aci&cp=1_665_2