

National Influenza Committee Guidelines for H1N1 and Sporting Events

Source: Guidelines for H1N1 and sporting events [Northwest Territories
http://www.bigmedicine.ca/americas.htm#1021_Guidelines_for_H1N1_and_sporting_events_#ixzz0UfE19nP4]
[or shortcut at www.tiny.cc/sport90]

Further details for the hosting of Sporting Events are at <http://stlucia.gov.lc/mce/>
National Influenza Plan is available at <http://www.tiny.cc/nip>
Past Guidelines in the Series are Available at...
<http://stlucia.gov.lc/flu/guidelines.htm>

This document provides interim guidance on suggested means to reduce the spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus at Sporting Events. Recommendations are interim based on current knowledge of the H1N1 outbreak, and may be revised as more information becomes available.

Background

In May 2009 the World Health Organisation designated H1N1 as a "*Public Health Emergency of International Concern*" and the virus has lived up to its description. As the National Flu Committee deepens its response to this flu, Saint Lucians are called upon to partner with the Committee.

Sporting Events range from programs conducted for several hours in a day (not overnight) to programs that are residential and involve many weeks in group settings e.g. Sporting Camps. Saint Lucia also hosts a number of regional and international events. This guidance will address general recommendations that apply to all programs and some specific guidance that applies to programs that are residential.

At this time, CDC recommends the primary means to reduce spread of influenza focuses on early identification of the ill. This includes the cooperation of athletes, chaperons, supporters and staff, staying home (or away from others) when ill, conducting good cough and hand hygiene etiquette, and environmental controls that encourage use of these hygiene practices.

Novel Influenza A (H1N1)

The symptoms of influenza usually include fever plus at least either cough or sore throat. These symptoms are often referred to as an influenza-like illness (ILI). Influenza infection can also lead to additional symptoms like headache, tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, diarrhea, and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, novel influenza A (H1N1) infection in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. When severe, pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death are possible.

Novel influenza A (H1N1) is thought to spread in the same way that seasonal influenza virus spread, mainly through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with the virus. People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

General Recommendations and Preparedness for Sporting Events

a. Steps Sport Organizers Can Take To Help Prevent Participants, Coordinators, And Chaperones From Getting Sick

There are a number of steps organizers can take to prevent the spread of illness at all times and not just during a flu pandemic. These steps include:

1. ensure that there are adequate hand-washing stations and hand sanitizers for event participants and that there is signage to remind people of the proper hand-washing technique;
2. encourage good hygiene by providing all organizers, participants, and chaperones with educational material (i.e. posters or brochures available at <http://stlucia.gov.lc/flu>) and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes;
3. washing hands with soap and water; and not sharing drinks, or food;
4. keep additional tissue supplies and waste receptacles at the venue;
5. have all coordinators, chaperones and organizers on alert to recognize flu symptoms and isolate anyone with flu symptoms;
6. arrange to have parents/guardians pick-up sick participants as quickly as possible;
7. get any organizers, chaperones, or coordinators who are ill to go home, and if that is not possible, ensure they self-isolate;
8. if you have out-of-town or international participants, have a room with a cot available in case somebody gets sick and needs to be isolated; and
9. advise all participants, organizers, coordinators, chaperones and families that sick people must stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have flu symptoms. It is especially important that they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever. This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines, like any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen.

b. A Participant Becomes Sick While En Route To/From Or At The Organized Event

Participants who are feeling somewhat sick before an event should not attend. If the participant becomes sick during the event, the person should be isolated right away. Participants who are competing in their home town should be picked up by a family member right away. Out-of-town participants should be isolated from the other participants.

c. Financial Implications for a participant to go home early if they become sick

Out-of-town or international participants who become sick while at a sporting event should not be sent home immediately. Travel should be avoided while sick. Participants from out-of-town or from another country should be isolated from the other participants. If the participant must travel while sick, the participant should wear a surgical mask or a bandana over the nose and mouth to avoid making other people sick.

d. Notification Of Family If A Participant Becomes Sick At An Event

Organizers should work with chaperones to advise parents/guardians if a participant becomes ill at an event. Participants who are competing in their home town should be picked up by a family member right away. Out-of-town/international participants should be isolated from the other participants.

e. Cancellation of Sports Events Because of H1N1

There is no need at this time to cancel sports events because of cases of flu occurring in participants or supporters.

Simple precautions at the individual level, like frequent hand washing, coughing and sneezing into the arm instead of hands, and staying home when sick will help slow the spread of the H1N1 flu virus.

If there are large numbers ill, you may have to postpone an event due to shortage of numbers of participants or supervisors - **you should have plans in place to prepare for this.**

f. Planning For An Event

Model Plans are available at <http://stlucia.gov.lc/coop/>

For Technical Assistance with writing a Business Continuity Plan that will address the influenza virus contact the Ministry of Health at 468-5300 or eMail the Bureau of Health Education at bureauofhealth@yahoo.com attention the Director.

g. Shaking Hands after a Game

Banning shaking hand after a game is not necessary; however, all participants should be encouraged to wash their hands after each game, and to avoid touching their mouth, nose and eyes to avoid spreading germs.

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