

## **(June 12, 2009) Pandemic Alert Update #6**

### **World Health Organization declares full Pandemic Alert.**

Yesterday, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Phase Six Pandemic Alert. This is the highest alert status for a pandemic influenza event. This means that the WHO is signaling governments around the world who have not already done so to activate their national pandemic plans. It is also a signal to drug makers to speed up research leading to production of an H1N1 related vaccine.

The reality is however, that many governments and drug companies have been on alert since the H1N1 influenza virus was uncovered in Mexico.

As of June 10, 2009, the WHO reports **27,737 confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza** around the world with **141 deaths** related to the virus. While technically such a situation constitutes a pandemic event, fortunately the current situation has not fulfilled the worst case scenarios anticipated by pandemic models such as those related to an avian influenza. WHO stresses that declaring Phase Six does not imply at this point any change in the severity of the virus.

Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of WHO reminds us that;

- this H1N1 influenza virus is unique and has never circulated within human populations before
- because of its international spread, any form of travel restrictions or efforts to quarantine populations would be ineffective
- that this virus is spreading under a close and careful international watch
- the overwhelming majority of person infected experience mild symptoms and recover quickly
- however, the need for surveillance, due diligence and mitigation of spread is vital as the nature and scope of this pandemic event can change rapidly
- as the virus continues to spread, it is prudent to prepare for more cases and to anticipate a “second wave” of infections

***In developed countries such as Canada, public health officials suggest that no additional precautions are being suggested at this time.***

As of June 10, 2009, Canada has **2446 confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza** with **4 deaths** reported as related to the virus. As of June 10, 2009 Ontario Public Health reports **1,638 confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza** with **2 deaths** reported related to the virus.

The Diocesan Influenza Pandemic Response Plan activates when the alert status of Phase Four is announced by the WHO. The advantage of such an early response is that the Diocese is now informed and aware of this growing threat. Parishes who have activated their pandemic plans are already exercising due diligence as regards proper hygiene and are observing those protocols which apply to liturgical practice and worship. Parish nurses are already engaged in educating congregations across the Diocese as to proper behaviours which can mitigate the spread of the H1N1 virus.

While the impact of this pandemic event remains mild, the pastoral impact is experienced within the accompanying anxiety, stress and worry related to this urgent health concern. As health professionals continue to debate within the media the potential impact and duration of this pandemic, the church, as a community resource, has a vital role to play as an agent of calm, reassurance and sound information.

Therefore, clergy and parish employees are reminded of the following;

- **That as of April 30<sup>th</sup> the practice of intinction is prohibited.**
- **In response to the pastoral needs of the worried well, communion in one kind is an acceptable tradition within the Anglican Church.**
- **That social distancing should NOT be discouraged and that the exchange of the peace can be accomplished with a simple nod of acknowledgement.**
- **That basic hygiene regarding the “sleeve sneeze”, washing of hands and the use of hand sanitizers is encouraged** (posters regarding these practices were mailed to each parish on June 5<sup>th</sup>, additional posters are available through the office of the Coordinator of Chaplaincy Services).
- **Please reference the Influenza Pandemic Response Plan, Appendix D, Liturgical Conduct, page 17 for information regarding hygienic protocols.**

For reliable and up-to-date information regarding the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic, visit;  
World health Organization @ [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)  
Public Health Ontario @ [www.publichealthontario.ca](http://www.publichealthontario.ca)

Additional information, resources and previous pandemic updates are available on the Diocesan website, [www.toronto.anglican.ca/resources/emergencypreparedness](http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/resources/emergencypreparedness).

*Future Pandemic Updates will be issued as significant events occur.*

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