



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Utah's H1N1 Outbreak Shows Signs of Slowing**

*Public health officials anticipate illness will increase this fall*

**(Salt Lake City)** – New data released today by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) indicate the statewide outbreak of novel H1N1 influenza appears to be slowing. Several indicators suggest the outbreak has peaked in Utah. However, this is a statewide view. There are local areas in Utah that are still seeing high influenza activity. In addition, public health officials are preparing now for the likelihood that the spread of the virus may increase in the fall and winter months.

“We will continue to track the outbreak and will monitor any changes in the severity of illness people are experiencing,” said state epidemiologist Dr. Robert Rolfs. “It’s still very important that people not let their guard down in helping limit the spread of disease.”

The UDOH reports 245 Utahns have been hospitalized due to illnesses associated with the novel H1N1 influenza virus. There have been no new H1N1-associated deaths reported in the past week.

Still, public health officials stress the virus continues to circulate in the state, and Utahns should take precautions to prevent themselves and others from becoming sick. Some important steps people can take are to:

- Stay home if you are sick until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.

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It's uncertain at this time how widespread and severe the illness may become this fall and winter, when flu viruses are typically more active. The virus may continue to cause relatively mild illness for most people with severe illness for a few. However, history shows the virus can change and become more virulent.

“Countries in the Southern Hemisphere are just now entering their flu seasons, so we may be able to get some clues based on how the virus behaves in that part of the world,” Dr. Rolfs said. “It would be wise for families and businesses to begin to develop emergency plans as a precaution,” he added.

Families can begin preparing by updating, or creating, their emergency stockpile. Items like food, water, tissue, sanitizers, over-the-counter medications and prescription medications are all useful items to have on hand in the event you become ill and are confined to your home. Families should also prepare to care for a child who needs to stay home from school due to illness or for the possibility of school or childcare closures.

Businesses will play a key role in ensuring the health and safety of employees and in limiting the spread of illness. Business preparedness plans may include establishing policies for telecommuting arrangements, use of sick-leave benefits, and best practices for limiting the spread of influenza at the workplace. Schools can prepare to make sanitation supplies readily available, to provide educational support to students who must stay home when ill, and for the possibility of closure in a severe outbreak.

Hospitals, clinics and doctors' offices should prepare to care for more patients sick with influenza than usual.

More information about the novel H1N1 virus, and developing personal and business preparedness plans, is available by visiting [www.health.utah.gov/h1n1](http://www.health.utah.gov/h1n1).

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