



## H1N1 Pandemic Update

6/16/2009

On June 11, 2009 World Health Organization (WHO) raised H1N1 influenza alert to phase 6, the last and highest phase, declaring a pandemic. It is the first influenza pandemic declared by WHO in 41 years. It is important to note that WHO does not rate pandemic phase on severity of the infection but rather on geographical spread. This news was expected since H1N1 influenza infection has spread to over 74 countries.

### **How does WHO define a pandemic?**

Pandemic is defined by a spread of animal or animal-human influenza virus from human to human. The virus is either entirely novel or a recombination of previously seen strains. It spreads easily among human populations and had been identified in more than 3 countries.

*For more information APUA recommends the following document:*

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/GIPA3AideMemoire.pdf>

### **How is the severity of the pandemic gauged?**

Currently, WHO is considering H1N1 pandemic as moderate. It bases its assessment on the following factors:

1. The rate of influenza deaths and/or number of severe cases are characteristic to the local area. Based on the latest assessments the rate and severity of the infection is similar to the seasonal local rates with exception of a few regions in Mexico and some states in the US.
2. Need for hospitalization or medical treatment. Most people do not require medical attention or hospitalization to recover.
3. The ability of the local healthcare systems to cope with the influx of people seeking medical attention. In general, most of the affected areas have been able to manage.

However, WHO is warning that a stronger strain of influenza may emerge in the fall of this year as seen historically with 1918 and 1957 (was not as severe as 1918) pandemics.

*Please refer to the link to “H1N1 Fact Sheet” on APUA website for more in-depth information about H1N1 influenza. <http://www.tufts.edu/med/apua/Patients/swineflu.pdf>*

*APUA also recommends the following websites for additional information:*

<http://pandemicflu.gov/index.html>

<http://publichealth.blog.state.ma.us/h1n1-swine-flu/>

<http://www.mass.gov>

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Swine Flu: Pandemic is Declared.  
World Health Organization. Influenza A (H1N1).