

# MALTA ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH MEDICINE

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In view of the current global threat posed by the novel (swine) influenza A(H1N1) virus that the World Health Organisation has raised to pandemic phase V status last night, the MAPHM would like to stress the public health significance of the current situation, since human to human spread of this virus is now widespread indicating that a pandemic could be imminent. There has been evidence of human-to-human transmission in Mexico, the US and even in the EU.

A number of cases have been confirmed in the Mexico, US, Canada, Costa Rica, Peru, New Zealand, Australia, South Korea and Israel, Austria, France, Germany, Spain and UK, and The Netherlands, but none in Malta so far.

The Malta Association of Public Health Medicine (MAPHM) would like to like to encourage the public not to panic, to continue with business as usual and to keep informed by looking out for media updates in this regard, in particular by the Public Health Regulation Division, WHO, ECDC and CDC and MAPHM website [www.maphm.com](http://www.maphm.com).

Influenza is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by infected persons. The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza.

The MAPHM would like to stress to the public the importance of reinforcing everyday actions to stay healthy:

- ✓ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the bin immediately after you use it and wash your hands straight away without touching anything before you do so.
- ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- ✓ If you have travelled recently to Mexico within the last 7 to 10 days and have symptoms of flu, stay at home and limit contact with others. Contact your doctor or the health authorities immediately.
- ✓ Do not take any antiviral medication without first consulting your doctor, since improper use may lead to viral resistance.
- ✓ Follow public health advice regarding avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures e.g. avoid shaking hands.
- ✓ If possible avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas.

The MAPHM would like to commend all the efforts and expert contributions by public health doctors worldwide and particularly locally to mitigate the effects of this global public health emergency.

Dr. Julian Mamo  
President, MAPHM