



**Emerald
Health and Education
Foundation**

Pandemic!

News pictures of masked faces at airports and on the streets in various countries as people seek to protect themselves from a new disease. Schools and public buildings closing in various places as worried health officials seek to check the spread of this new strain of influenza.

Our tied-together world is being ravished by yet another viral assault as people board a plane at one end of the world and get off in another a few hours later. There is no possibility of quarantine, as most that have been exposed to these viral agents don't even know until they come down with symptoms several days later—and by then who knows where they may be!

The current flu threat, dubbed H1N1, or perhaps more affectionately known as 'swine' or 'Mexican' flu is a new mutation that has not been seen before. While it is something to understand about and take precautions against, with a proper response there is no need to fear this strain of the flu any more than many other disease agents that are circulating in our world today.

The biggest aspect of dealing with this as with any other disease is prevention, and there are several simple steps that all of us can take: Wash your hands several times a day. One primary way diseases like this are spread is through transmission by our touching our face or eating with contaminated hands. What have you touched in the past day? From the coins in your pocket to the door at the post office, there are multiple things we have our hands on day by day. Who just touched it before you? Along with this, clean the door latches in your home or business once a day if they get a lot of use. One educator told me this helped tremendously at her school, she just wiped down the door latches once a day with a disinfectant wet wipe during the flu season.

Keeping your immune system strong is another vital first line of defence. Drink enough water, don't overdo it on the sweets and get enough rest. A compromised immune system is a sure way to open the door to those nasty bugs! Especially with the holidays coming along with the long dark days of winter, the more sensible we are about our lifestyle habits the less we will suffer with colds and flues. Just watch the yearly cycle. After the start of the holiday season with Halloween, with the gorging of sweets and late nights, the children will start to suffer with the colds and flues. They will take them to school, share around as they are all packed into the classroom together and then will bring those little organisms home to the rest of the family! If you or your child are sick, stay home for a few days until you are over the worst of it. Especially if you have a fever, try to respect others and keep away from groups.

The flu vaccine may be something to consider as well, especially for the elderly or those whose system has been weakened in some way. Your GP is the person to ask about that aspect of prevention.

We don't live in a perfect world and all of us will contract sickness from time to time. The extent that it affects us and the speed with which we can repel it depends largely on the condition of our immune system. For more information on lifestyle aspects that impact your immune system see: <http://www.emeraldhef-ie.org/NewStart.htm>.

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