

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Business continuity planning essential in pandemic**

Businesses must start planning to cope with staff shortages, which health authorities say are inevitable as the Swine Flu (Novel H1N1 Influenza A) spreads rapidly.

Swine flu emergency operations centre incident controller Cathy Taylor says keeping businesses open will be a challenge as the numbers of people who get sick with influenza increases.

“This will be a serious issue in service businesses which the public are dependent on, such as pharmacies, rest homes and food businesses, but all businesses will be affected to some degree. Some staff will be absent because they are sick, or are needed to care for family members who are sick,” she says. “Business continuity planning is essential to ensure businesses can stay open and supply services and goods to the community.”

Hospital managers at Tauranga and Whakatane are working on contingency plans to ensure vital health services can be maintained throughout the pandemic which is expected to affect up to half the population in the next 18 months.

“We are also looking at ways to support GPs and primary healthcare workers, as they will be providing most of the health care to flu sufferers,” she says.

“Anyone who thinks they may have influenza should stay home, keep warm and ensure they drink plenty of fluids,” says Cathy. “It’s really important to stay away from other people as this illness can spread within the community very quickly. Stay home doesn’t just mean stay home from work or school – it means stay home from any place or activity where others are around.”

“For most people H1N1 influenza is a mild to moderate illness, similar to the seasonal influenza we expect each year. Since most people recover from infection without the need for hospitalization or medical care, treatment will be targeted at those who are most at risk,” she says. “If medical advice is needed, people can phone Healthline 0800 611 116 or their GP.”

It’s important that people do not turn up at a medical centre or hospital without phoning ahead, as this could help spread germs to others. “People are asked not to go to an emergency department unless they have a genuine emergency.”

ENDS

### **Recommended Measures to Help Prevent the Spread of Flu**

Good hygiene is the most important step in preventing the spread of influenza and other winter viruses:

- Wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and dry hands well on a regular basis
- Alcohol-based hand gel can also be used if soap and water are not readily available
- Try to stay a metre away from sick people.
- If you are ill do not go to work or school – stay at home.
- Keep coughs and sneezes covered, and dispose of tissues in a covered, lined rubbish bin. Remember to wash your hands afterwards.

Monitor your health:

- If you develop flu-like symptoms when you return to New Zealand after travelling, you should seek medical attention immediately.
- Ring first if possible.
- Tell the health care provider who sees you that you have been travelling.

**For more information contact:**

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