

BULLETIN

Updated flu alert - Health care workers advised to wear properly fitted N-95 respirators

April 30, 2009

Health care workers providing direct care ... in the same room or in close contact ... to SRI patients are advised to wear properly fit-tested N-95 respirators

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is urging health care workers and members of the public to take note of concerns raised by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) about an outbreak of Severe Respiratory Illness (SRI) or "Swine Influenza", that began in Mexico, is spreading globally, and has now arrived in several Canadian provinces including Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario.

Governments in a growing number of countries are monitoring the situation closely. Some have already issued travel warnings to the U.S. and Mexico and are gearing up for additional responses, including quarantine measures, as required.

NUPGE and its Component unions across the country represent over 60,000 health professionals in over 200 disciplines, including everything from Lab, Xray and EMS professionals to Respiratory Technologists and Pharmacists.

The union has produced a [Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist - pdf](#) for its health-care members, which outlines the necessary steps and equipment required for health-care workers to appropriately plan and protect themselves.

Dr. Donald Low, medical director of Ontario's public health laboratories, said Monday he suspects additional cases will quickly be identified across the country.

"The cases that have emerged so far in Mexico are "just the tip of the iceberg.... I dont think anybody's thinking that this is not across Canada," he said.

An [Important Health Notice](#) regarding the outbreak has been issued by the Ontario ministry of health.

It describes symptoms of the illness, screening questions to use in hospital emergency departments and precautions for health care workers to take.

"If cases of SRI are discovered in Ontario, health care workers providing direct care ... in the same room or in close contact ... to SRI patients are advised to wear properly fit-tested N-95 respirators," OPSEU says.

"All other health care workers are to follow routine practices. Patients who meet the definition of SRI are to be cared for in a single room."

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180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017