

September 11, 2009
SPECIAL NOTICE

Influenza Status:

NASA is monitoring the overall health of its employees as the new virus strain, 2009 H1N1 Influenza, spreads across the United States and the world, overlapping the regular annual flu season. The behavior of the 2009 H1N1 virus compared to the typical seasonal flu virus has shown some of the following differences:

- Higher infectivity,
- Milder symptoms,
- Lower preference for the older population,
- Higher morbidity and mortality in children younger than 2 years of age, pregnant women and obese individuals (body mass index > 30), and the elderly.

Current Expectations:

All indications are the virus is remaining stable. Because the virus is new to the human population, a continued rapid spread is expected. With the upcoming fall and winter seasons, the start of the school year, and the normal flu season, the incidence of 2009 H1N1 is expected to increase. The rate of total infection could reach up to 40% of the population. All Government agencies are expected to maintain regular operations.

Prevention:

Standard good hygiene practices are still the best prevention against this virus. Frequent hand washing, social distancing, and covering coughs significantly limit the spread of all germs. Vaccine for the 2009 H1N1 is expected to be distributed in limited quantities in mid-October.

- The 2009 H1N1 vaccine is different and separate from the seasonal flu vaccine,
- INDIVIDUALS SHOULD RECEIVE BOTH VACCINES to minimize the overall health impact of the flu on our population,
- CDC has prioritized vaccine distribution to maximize public health, and
- Health care workers and high risk groups will be vaccinated first.

Helpful Links:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.flu.gov)

The World Health Organization (www.who.int/en)

NASA Occupational Health Website (www.ohp.nasa.gov)