

## **Section 10 Public Health Measures**

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Public health measures (PHM) are non-medical interventions applied to reduce the spread of infectious diseases, including but not limited to:

- conducting case and contact management
- closing schools
- limiting public gatherings (a form of social distancing)
- providing public education
- issuing travel restrictions and screening of travelers.

The type of PHMs used and their timing depend on the epidemiology of the virus, for example its pathogenicity, mode/s of transmission, incubation period, attack rate in different age groups, period of communicability and susceptibility to antivirals.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the HKPRDHU pandemic influenza public health measures are to:

1. To decrease the number of individuals exposed to the novel virus and potentially slow the progress of the pandemic.
2. To slow disease spread and gain time for implementing medical measures (e.g., vaccine)
3. To reduce the morbidity and mortality, and economic and social disruption associated with the pandemic.

## **1. Legal Authority**

Under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) has the authority to implement public health measures HKPR District, such as issuing communicable disease orders and restricting gatherings. Under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act*, the MOH also has the authority to issue orders respecting students in a school.

In the event of an influenza pandemic, the threat will not be limited to a single health unit so the decision to use particular public health measures will be made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) in consultation with local medical officers of health and others. Close collaboration among health units on the type, timing and duration of public health measures will help ensure a consistent approach across the province and enhance both public confidence and the public's adherence to public health measures.

## **2. Factors to Consider when Choosing Public Health Measures**

The type of public health measures used during an influenza pandemic and their timing will depend on:

- The epidemiology of the virus (e.g., pathogenicity, mode(s) of transmission, incubation period, attack rate in different age groups, period of communicability, susceptibility to antivirals).
- The pandemic phase and the amount of virus activity in HKPR District (i.e., during phase 4 and 5, the focus of PHMs will be on individual measures to contain the virus (e.g., case and contact management; during phase 6, the focus will be on community measures designated to reduce risk of influenza).
- The characteristics of the community.
- Public compliance and the amount of social disturbance the measure will cause.
- Evidence of effectiveness.

### **3. Public Health Measures Activities**

Table 10.1 defines six public health measures that may be used in HKPRDHU to slow the spread of pandemic influenza. It also describes the types of activities that can be used to implement each measure.

**Table 10.1 Public Health Measures Activities**

Time Frame	Public Health Measure	Types of Activities Used to Implement the Measure
<p>From the pandemic alert period) and continue throughout a pandemic.</p>	<p><b><u>1. Public Education</u></b>                      Clear, consistent, accurate information given to the public to help them be prepared for a pandemic and reduce their risk.</p>	<p><b>i. <u>Individual infection prevention and control measures, including education about:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- hand hygiene, respiratory/cough etiquette, including covering one’s mouth when coughing or sneezing and proper tissue disposal, and other personal protective measures to avoid droplet/contact spread</li> <li>- the importance of fresh air and how to increase air circulation in buildings</li> <li>- the wearing of masks by the public or people who do not have influenza. This practice is not recommended at this time because it has not been proven effective in stopping or slowing the spread of influenza; however if individuals choose to wear masks, they should:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- wear a surgical mask</li> <li>- learn the proper procedures for putting masks on and taking them off (to avoid contact with droplets)</li> <li>- know how to dispose of the mask properly (i.e., without increasing the risk of infection)</li> <li>- know that a mask or any other personal protective equipment is not a substitute for hand hygiene</li> </ul> </li> <li>- how to clean and disinfect environmental surfaces to avoid droplet/contact spread.</li> </ul> <p><b>ii. <u>Social distancing, including messages advising people:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to stay home from day-care, school, work and public events if they have influenza-like-illness (ILI) symptoms or have had contact with someone with ILI</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to avoid large gatherings or crowds</li> <li>- to reduce non-essential travel</li> <li>- when and how to get information on any closures, cancellations or changes to community services/events</li> <li>- about emergency preparedness supplies they should have in their homes (e.g., food, water).</li> </ul>
<p>Depending on the severity of the pandemic strain, restrictions on foreign travel could begin very early in a pandemic in an effort to keep the pandemic strain out of Canada, and could continue throughout the pandemic.</p>	<p><b><u>2. Travel Restrictions</u></b>                  Travel restrictions are the responsibility of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and Ontario will comply with federal directions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refer to PHAC website for Travel Health Advisories (<a href="http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmppmv/pub_e.html">http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmppmv/pub_e.html</a>)</li> </ul>
<p>During the pandemic alert period and early in the pandemic period.</p>	<p><b><u>3. Case Management</u></b>                  Case management involves public health nurses and inspectors OR public health staff following up with individuals ill with influenza (i.e., cases) to provide information and strategies to reduce transmission to other people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Refer to <i>Next Steps</i> below</li> </ul>

	<p><b><u>4. Contact Management</u></b>                  Contact management is a highly labour intensive process of individually contacting anyone who has had close contact (i.e., within one metre) with someone with influenza during the time the person was infectious. Contacts are notified and advised to take steps to protect their health and the health of others.</p>	<p><b>i. <u>Education</u></b>                  Public health nurses and inspectors OR public health staff advise contacts about symptoms to watch for and what to do if they become ill.</p>
<p>Infection prevention and control and social distancing measures in schools and daycares would be implemented early in the pandemic and be maintained throughout a pandemic.</p>	<p><b><u>5. School and day-care</u></b>                  based infection prevention and control and social distancing measures</p>	<p><b>i. <u>Infection prevention and control measures</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- washing hands frequently and meticulously</li> <li>- practicing respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette, including covering one’s mouth when coughing or sneezing and proper tissue disposal</li> <li>- cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces (e.g. door handles, lunchroom tables, desks, etc.)</li> <li>- increasing fresh air in buildings (i.e., open windows)</li> <li>- asking parents to keep children who are sick at home.</li> </ul>
<p>Early in the pandemic and maintained through the pandemic.</p>	<p><b><u>6. Social distancing in the community</u></b>                  Social distancing measures are designed to reduce the number of close contact encounters that adults have in the community – including the workplace and the post secondary education system.</p>	<p><b>i. <u>Workplace infection prevention and control for nonhealth care settings</u></b></p> <p>The health unit will provide information and education that helps non-health care workplaces implement infection prevention and control measures including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- installing hand sanitizer stations in all workplaces and post secondary institutions</li> <li>- encouraging employees to wash their hands frequently and meticulously and practise respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette, including covering their mouth when coughing or sneezing and proper tissue disposal</li> <li>- cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- increasing fresh air in buildings (i.e., open windows)</li><li>- asking employees to stay home from work and social engagements when sick.</li></ul>

## **Activities under development**

The MOHLTC is in the process of developing the following PHMs activities:

### **1. Public Education**

- How to access health care advice/triage services (e.g., Telehealth, internet sites)
- Where and how to seek medical care in a way that minimizes exposure to influenza (e.g., go to your family physician for other health services, go to flu centres if you have influenza symptoms)
- Self care and how to care for others who are ill at home.

### **2. Case Management**

- Voluntary isolation
- Self care - how to care for someone with influenza at home and when and where to seek medical attention.
- Antivirals
- Public health follow-up – individual monitoring and group education.

### **3. Contact management**

- Voluntary and modified quarantine
- Public health follow-up – individual monitoring and group education.

### **4. School and day-care based infection prevention and control and social distancing measures**

- Social distancing
- School/Day care closures

### **5. Social distancing in the community**

- Social distancing
- Restricting public gatherings

## **Φ Next Steps**

To help health units implement public health measures consistently and the public comply with these measures, Ontario will develop the following guidelines:

- case and contact management during a pandemic for public health units
- the impact of public health measures and mitigating strategies on employers and businesses
- public health measures for daycares

- public health measures for elementary and secondary schools
- public health measures for post secondary schools
  
- public health measures for individuals and families.