



# Hamilton

August 21, 2009

To: Fall 2009 Study Abroad Participants

As you prepare to study abroad, you may be wondering how the H1N1 influenza (swine flu) will affect your travel. Please be assured that Hamilton College is monitoring this situation and any risks associated with the virus, international travel, and your participation in a study abroad program in Fall 2009. You most likely have received some information from your program provider by now regarding H1N1 and your programs plans and policies. ***I urge you and your parents to read that information closely, and to follow the advice of your program provider, who best knows the situation in your host country.*** This letter simply passes along some additional advice that I hope will help you take steps to prepare for a healthy sojourn abroad and to be prepared for possible travel restrictions.

## **Travel Preparations for Individuals at High Risk**

Based on the health risks associated with this flu strain, the CDC advises high-risk individuals and their physicians to “look carefully at the H1N1 flu situation in their destination and the available health-care options in the area. They should discuss their specific health situations and possible increased risk of traveling to the area affected by novel H1N1 flu.” Those at high risk for complications include:

- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders;
- Adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV);
- Pregnant women.
- If you have not already disclosed any underlying medical conditions to your program provider, do so now! This information will help them work with you, if necessary, to develop a plan to manage your health care while you are abroad.

## **Basic Health Precautions Abroad**

The CDC advises healthy people to make travel plans as they normally would and take common sense precautions to protect their health during travel:

- Wash your hands often with soap and running water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Use alcohol-based hand gels (containing at least 60% alcohol) when soap is not available and hands are not visibly dirty. You may wish to carry hand sanitizing gel with you on the airplane.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and put your used tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Pay attention to announcements from the local government and monitor the local health and security situation.

Your program provider will also be monitoring the situation, so pay close attention to email and other announcements regarding health from the program as well. Follow any movement restrictions and prevention recommendations. If you are feeling ill or have any health concerns, contact the program director.

### **Travel Restrictions and Delays**

At this time, passengers on flights arriving in the US are experiencing delays and screenings in some countries. According to an announcement by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/content/news-announcements/delays-H1N1-screening.aspx>, students on a flight from the United States may be asked to:

- Pass through a scanning device that checks their temperature. (The device may look like an airport metal detector, a camera, or another handheld device.)
- Have their temperature taken with an oral or ear thermometer.
- Fill out a sheet of questions about their health.
- Review information about the symptoms of H1N1 flu.
- Provide their address, phone number, and other contact information for where they will be residing abroad. (We encourage students to have the Hamilton emergency contact card provided at the predeparture meeting, as well as program provider and housing contact information for their destination, available in their carry-on bags.)
- Be quarantined for a period of time if a passenger on their flight is found to have symptoms of H1N1 flu.
- Contact health authorities in the country they are visiting if they become ill.

***The CDC recommends that individual do not travel if they feel sick.*** Passengers with a fever or respiratory symptoms or who are suspected to have H1N1 flu based on screening may be required to:

- Have a medical examination;
- Take a rapid flu test (which consists of a nasal swab sample);
- Be isolated from other individuals;
- Be hospitalized and given medical treatment, if they test positive for H1N1 flu.

We do not believe there is currently cause for undue alarm, but we provide this information so that you are fully and accurately informed. Hamilton will continue to monitor closely this situation and the websites of the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control as well as those of US embassies and local health authorities in order to respond to changes in the situation. If you and your parents are interested in following the situation, we suggest the following reliable websites:

- World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int/en/>
- US Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- US State Department: <http://www.travel.state.gov/>

Finally, your program provider is your first point of contact while you are abroad and you should maintain close contact with your program office and personnel. Nonetheless, you should feel free to contact Hamilton if you believe we can be of help at any time!

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