

Information on the new H1N1 influenza virus (“Swine Flu”) for all fair participants

Koelnmesse takes the protection of participants at the fairs and conventions against the new H1N1 influenza virus very seriously. An experienced team of in-house experts is continuously analysing the situation and monitoring and/or initiating measures in very close contact with the responsible public health authorities, which are responsible for assessing the progression of the illness and the further course of action. It goes without saying that Koelnmesse will appropriately take all regulatory actions into consideration.

To date, the World Health Organization is assuming a moderate pandemic. According to the Robert Koch Institute and the Public Health Department of the City of Cologne, the illness frequently takes a relatively mild course.

Koelnmesse has taken the following measures:

- Hygiene information in the sanitary facilities and throughout the entire fair grounds
- Hand disinfection units throughout the entire fair grounds
- “Health Advice” (Staff members from the German Red Cross / DRK)
- Areas in the medical centres for the initial treatment of possibly ill individuals – stockpiling of flu medications to relieve symptoms
- Sensitisation of the Koelnmesse staff and service providers
- Continuous communication with the responsible health authorities and/or hospitals and immediate implementation of regulatory measures

What can I do?

Observing general rules of hygiene can lower the risk of infection:

- Avoid shaking hands as well as coughing or sneezing on others
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth
- Use and securely dispose of disposable paper tissues
- Thoroughly wash hands, for example following personal interactions, using sanitary facilities and before eating as well as after contact with objects that are used by many people

For your own protection and that of others, people who experience symptoms should contact a doctor immediately. The symptoms of the new H1N1 influenza virus are similar to the symptoms of the annual winter flu: fever, cough, headache and body aches, fatigue, loss of appetite. Some people who were infected with the new H1N1 influenza virus also reported nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Two medical centres have been set up on the Koelnmesse fair grounds for enquiries and initial treatment measures.

Do hygienic face masks provide protection?

Within the scope of their framework pandemic plan, the World Health Organization (WHO) does not recommend masks for the general population. A hygienic mask over the mouth and nose, as commonly seen in hospitals, primarily reduces the number of germs that are exhaled by the user into their surroundings (and thus – if at all – should be worn by ill individuals to protect others). There are no sufficient data on their effectiveness during a pandemic. Furthermore, suitable hygienic masks could not be worn permanently. In this regard, they cannot be used to achieve one hundred percent protection. In any case, the aforementioned preventative measures should not be disregarded due to a false sense of confidence in being protected by wearing a mask.

Where can I obtain current information on the progression of the new influenza virus?

- International: World Health Organization, www.who.int / Pandemic (H1N1) 2009
- Germany: Robert Koch Institute, www.rki.de/influenza or www.pandemierisiko.info or www.wir-gegen-viren.de
- North Rhine-Westphalia:
 - Internet, www.neuegrippe.nrw.de
 - Hotline for the Ministry for Labour, Health and Social Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, 0180 / 3100 210 (weekdays from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.)
- Cologne: Hotline for the Public Health Department of the City of Cologne, 0221 / 221-24215 (daily from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.)