



We don't want you to get H1N1, and we don't want H1N1 to get you!

By Susan Epperly, B.A., L.M.T.I., C.M.T.

As Massage Therapists and health care professionals, we are committed to helping our clients live healthier lives. That's why we are doing all we can to help protect ourselves, and you, from contracting the H1N1 influenza. We realize that protecting our clients begins with taking care of ourselves and being vigilant about maintaining an impeccably clean, sanitary clinic space.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and Centers for Disease Control recommend the following 10 steps for staying healthy at work, and we are making sure to follow these guidelines in order to help ourselves, and you, stay healthy, happy, and flu-free!

1) Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. Be sure to wash your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.

(Addendum: We wash our hands, arms, and elbows thoroughly with antibacterial soap immediately after each massage session, as well as after eating, using the restroom, and touching used linens. We also keep alcohol-based hand sanitizer in our clinic room so that we can sanitize our hands throughout our massage sessions without leaving the room).

2) Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes, which spreads germs.

3) Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your elbow. Dispose of tissues in no-touch trash receptacles.

(Addendum: You'll notice that all of the trash cans in our clinic are covered, and are opened by foot pedals, so that we never need to touch the trash can lids).

4) Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean, such as telephones, computer keyboards, door knobs, and other surfaces.

(Addendum: We make it a habit to wipe down the doorknobs, seats, massage table, shelves, and other surfaces in our clinic room with Clorox brand disinfecting wipes after *every* massage session).

5) Do not use coworkers' phones, desks, offices or other equipment without cleaning it first.

(Addendum: Again, any surfaces in our clinic room that come in contact with a client are wiped down with Clorox brand disinfecting wipes before any other client comes in contact with those surfaces).

6) Don't spread the flu! If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends that people with flu-like illness stay home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.

(Addendum: We will absolutely not risk exposing our clients to the flu by coming to work

sick. If we ever do feel ill, especially with a fever, it is our policy to cancel our appointments until we have been free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines, as per the CDC's guidelines. Likewise, if you feel ill, especially with a fever, not only is receiving massage contraindicated for you, but by coming to the clinic, you risk infecting us, along with our other clients. So, if you are ill, please call us to discuss rescheduling your appointment).

7) Get vaccinated against seasonal flu, which can protect you against seasonal influenza viruses (but not H1N1).

(Addendum: Of course, getting vaccinated is a personal decision that should be given careful consideration after consulting with one's doctor).

8) Ask your doctor if you should get the H1N1 flu vaccine. The government recommends that health care workers, children, pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions including asthma, heart disease and diabetes get the H1N1 flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available. People living with or caring for infants under 6 months old should also be vaccinated to protect those children because they are too young to be vaccinated. For more information about who should get vaccinated, visit: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.

9) Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet and exercise.

(Addendum: Of course, provided that you're not feeling ill with flu-like symptoms, regular massages are a great way to rest, relax, and support your health).

10) Learn more. Visit www.flu.gov or call the Centers for Disease Control at (800) CDC-INFO or TTY (888) 232-6348.

We hope that it puts your mind at ease to know that we are taking every possible precaution to safeguard ourselves and our clients from infection. As your Massage Therapists, it's part of our job to help you stay healthy, happy, and flu-free!

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