



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, DC

CORNELIUS KERWIN  
PRESIDENT

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**TO:** Campus Community  
**FROM:** Neil Kerwin, President  
**SUBJECT:** H1N1 Update

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Last April, American University leaders and our Emergency Response Team (ERT) began to assess and respond to the H1N1 flu, using guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the D.C. Department of Health, and the university's existing pandemic plan. As we learned more about the virus, including its level of contagiousness and virility, we began monitoring and responding to a small number of cases among students, employees, and visitors, with no serious impact on the health of our community or the normal functions of the university.

Health officials expect the frequency of H1N1 flu cases to increase significantly this fall. We were advised to prepare plans designed to limit the spread of the illness and maintain the critical functions of the university, should a large number of students and employees become ill, or should the virus begin to cause more serious illness. In addition, we were encouraged to consider the effects of high absenteeism on the normal functions of the university, which might require us to revise our traditional academic delivery systems and campus activities, or suspend classes. In response, the university refined its contingency plans, including steps to meet the particular needs of resident students during an outbreak. Planning was extended to departmental levels.

Next week, we will begin to communicate key elements of the plan and specific procedures that are relevant to the situation as it currently exists. Patricia Kelshian, the leader of the Emergency Response Team and executive director of Risk Management and Safety Services, will provide information about the procedures and available resources. She will recommend preparations that students, faculty, and staff should make for this unusual fall flu season. Following this initial communication, we will update the AU community regularly to address the availability of flu inoculations and health resources, provide guidance on leave and attendance policies, and highlight changes in CDC guidance. We will also remind you of steps you can take to remain healthy and—equally important—to respond appropriately if you become sick.

You have an important role to play in the university's response to the flu. Common sense steps can limit your exposure and the spread of the disease. The single most effective action you can take is frequent and thorough hand washing with soap and warm water or hand

sanitizers. You may also wish to extend the “social distance” between you and others to limit exposure to coughs or sneezes.

If you do begin to experience symptoms that include a fever, cough, and upper respiratory congestion, you should “self-isolate” and limit your contact with others until 24 hours after your fever is gone. Those at high risk for flu complications, including children and adolescents, those over 65, pregnant women, and those with respiratory conditions or depressed immune systems should contact their healthcare providers for further guidance and possible treatment with anti-viral medications, if they become ill. For more information and resources, go to [Flu.gov](https://www.flu.gov).

It is important for all of us to stay attuned to this developing situation and informed about the preparations underway to help the university community get through what could be a challenging semester. Our intent is to help protect the health of the community, prevent the interruption of critical university operations, and maintain a high-quality educational experience. Thank you in advance for playing your part.