



July 2009



## **The H1N1 virus**

**Staying safe during your studies with Bell**

# 1. Introduction

## The Influenza A (H1N1) virus – the facts

- The global H1N1 pandemic has, understandably, caused much anxiety and alarm amongst prospective students concerned about whether it is safe to travel to study in the UK and Malta.
- Unfortunately, many of the media reports have been exaggerated - or simply untrue. The simple truth is that there are no countries in the world which are immune to the effects of the pandemic and the UK remains a very safe country to visit, with strong safeguards in place – and an excellent health infrastructure - to protect visitors who do feel unwell.
- Although some students and their parents may understandably have concerns about travelling to the UK to study, the truth is that for the vast majority of people, any potential risks are outweighed by the life changing experience of studying in a foreign country and of making new friends from around the world.
- Bell's reputation is built upon the quality of pastoral care we give to all our students and we have extensive procedures and processes in place in all our centres, to ensure the comfort and well being of all our students on courses in the UK and Malta.
- The authorities in the UK are no longer testing every suspected incidence of the virus and so it is unlikely that anyone falling ill with flu-like symptoms will be given a definitive diagnosis. Although we have had no confirmed cases of H1N1 in any Bell centres we have had a small number of students displaying flu-like symptoms and who have been prescribed anti-viral medication before recovering and continuing their studies.
- The welfare, safety and comfort of all our students are of paramount importance to all the Bell team and we are reviewing the situation on a daily basis, in full consultation with appropriate governmental and medical agencies.
- This document is designed to give some more general information about the procedures in place in our centres and we hope that you find this information helpful. If you would like further support or advice please don't hesitate to contact us at [info@bell-worldwide.com](mailto:info@bell-worldwide.com) where we will do all we can to answer your query.

## 2. Before you travel

### What you need to consider

- At the current time, there is no governmental or agency advice advising people against travelling to the United Kingdom or Malta. There is also no substantive evidence to suggest that by travelling to these destinations to study students will be at any greater risk of ill health than if they had remained at home.
- Official World Health Organisation (WHO) advice on whether it is safe to travel<sup>1</sup> states:
  - Yes. WHO is not recommending travel restrictions related to the outbreak of the influenza A(H1N1) virus. Today, global travel is commonplace and large numbers of people move around the world for business and leisure. Limiting travel and imposing travel restrictions would have very little effect on stopping the virus from spreading, but would be highly disruptive to the global community.
  - Influenza A(H1N1) has already been confirmed in many parts of the world. The global response now focuses on minimizing the impact of the virus through the rapid identification of cases, and providing patients with appropriate medical care, rather than on stopping its spread internationally.
  - Scientific research based on mathematical modelling shows that restricting travel would be of limited or no benefit in stopping the spread of disease. Historical records of previous influenza pandemics, as well as experience with SARS, validate this.
- However, for a small number of people suffering from pre-existing medical conditions (including diabetes and respiratory conditions) or in higher risk groups (including pregnant women, very young children and those aged over 65) it may be prudent to avoid travelling and we would advise people, if they have any concerns, to contact their doctor before they depart.

1. Source: [http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently\\_asked\\_questions/travel/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/travel/en/index.html)

## 3. During you/your child's course

### What to do if you/your child becomes unwell

- All Bell staff in all Bell centres have been fully trained on how to respond to students who become unwell. They have access to the very best healthcare provision and can ensure that students are well cared for and that their families and agents are kept fully advised of the situation.
- If you/your child begins to feel unwell during the course of your/their studies with Bell you/they should contact a member of staff immediately, who will be able to ensure that they receive access to appropriate medical care and advice.
- Where medical advice is required, it will be obtained from a fully qualified medical practitioner.
- If the medical practitioner believes that the patient's symptoms resemble those of the H1N1 virus then it is likely that they will prescribe anti-viral medication and recommend that the patient is kept isolated to prevent any further contamination.
- In such cases, Bell staff will ensure that the patient is attended to and well looked after, although it will be important that they remain in isolation until they have completed their treatment and their symptoms have disappeared.
- Where students feel well enough to continue to study and have access to the internet, Bell will arrange for them to access distance learning materials – at no additional cost – so that they may continue their studies.

### Staying safe during the course

- The best way of remaining safe is to follow the British Government's, "*Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.*" advice in order to reduce risk of cross infection. Copies of this information can also be downloaded in other languages at [www.bell-centres.com/h1n1](http://www.bell-centres.com/h1n1)
- We are also doing a number of other things to ensure the continued comfort and safety of students during their course with Bell. These include:
  - the use of special bacterial soap in the toilets or cloakrooms
  - the use of special cleaning materials throughout the school
  - special procedures for disposing of waste.

- At the commencement of their course, all students will also be fully briefed on the measures in place for their safety and the steps they can take to protect themselves.
- Student services staff are also on hand throughout the duration of the course to answer any concerns students may have and to assist them in getting medical attention as required.
- If at any time during your stay in the UK students feel unwell or experience flu-like symptoms it is important that they obtain medical advice and Bell staff will be able to assist with this. Typical symptoms of the H1N1 virus include the following, although it is important to remember that many of these may also be related to other seasonal coughs and colds:
  - Fever
  - Tiredness
  - Loss of appetite
  - Coughing
  - Sore throat
  - Pain in muscles and joints
  - Headache and chills
- If students do feel unwell then, to help them recover quickly and to prevent any risk of further infection, it is important that they do not come into class until after they have received medical advice and / or completed any treatment advised by a doctor.
- If students have any questions or concerns, no matter how small, they should speak immediately to a member of staff who will be able to assist them.

## After leaving the course

- To help control the spread of the virus, some airlines have begun screening passengers before boarding aeroplanes.
- At the end of their Bell course, all students will be given an emergency contact number so that, in the unlikely event of them being denied access to their flight whilst at the airport, they will be able to obtain immediate help and support from the Bell team.

## 4. Bell global centres

### What if you are studying at a Bell centre outside the UK/Malta?

- Because incidence of the H1N1 virus is now widespread throughout the world, students studying in their own country are no more or less at risk of infection than those travelling to the UK or Malta.
- If you are studying – or due to study - at a Bell centre outside the UK and Malta you should:
  - Follow all local medical advice and guidance given by authorities in your own country.
  - If you do feel unwell then, to prevent further transmission and for your own well being and comfort, you should remain at home and not attend class until after you have taken appropriate medical advice.
  - Contact staff at your Bell centre by telephone or e-mail with any concerns that you may have. You can find their contact details at [www.bell-worldwide.com/locations](http://www.bell-worldwide.com/locations).

## 5. Further information

- Useful phone numbers:
  - Bell 24 Hour Emergency Helpline: 01580 879100
  - NHS Direct: 0845 4647
  - UK Government Swine Flu Information Line: 0800 1513 513
  
- Useful web-sites:
  - [www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pandemicflu)
  - [www.bell-centres.com/h1n1](http://www.bell-centres.com/h1n1)
  - [www.bell-worldwide.com/locations](http://www.bell-worldwide.com/locations)
  - [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
  
- Useful e-mail addresses:
  - [info@bell-worldwide.com](mailto:info@bell-worldwide.com)