**IDPH News Release**

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**World Health Organization Pandemic Flu Level Raised to Phase 6**

*Flu season may last through summer*

The World Health Organization today raised the pandemic designation to Phase 6. This designation is based on the geographic spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus, not on the severity of the illness. Today’s announcement is not unexpected and will have no impact on the response in Iowa. From the beginning, the Iowa Dept. of Public Health (IDPH) has assumed an aggressive public health approach to this outbreak.

“The goal of IDPH and local public health, since the outbreak began, has been to try and keep one step ahead of this unpredictable virus, and to do the planning and preparation necessary to keep Iowans healthy,” said IDPH Director Tom Newton. “In addition to the work being done at the state level, local public health officials continue to be on the front lines of disease surveillance and prevention, working directly with local health care providers, schools, and other community partners and leaders.”

Spring typically signals the end of the influenza season; however, there may be continuing spread of both seasonal and novel influenza A (H1N1) over the summer and into the fall. It’s important for Iowans to remember the best ways to prevent the spread of flu:

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
- Stay home from work or school and do not travel while ill.
- Wash your hands often.

A pandemic means the virus, for which no one has immunity, has spread around the world. Although the virus continues to spread, the disease remains a mild one, for the most part. For more information on novel influenza A (H1N1), visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/).