

Government Closely Monitoring Seasonal Influenza Trends Across the Country

No Cause for Panic: Seasonal Influenza Remains Self-Limiting; No New or Unusual Virus Strain Detected, Says DG ICMR Dr. Rajiv Bahl

H1N1 in India Shows Expected Seasonal Changes, No Unusual Genetic Shift Detected

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The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), in coordination with the Department of Health Research (DHR), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), is closely monitoring the prevailing seasonal respiratory illness trends across the country through a robust pan-India surveillance network.

Addressing the media in New Delhi, **Secretary, Department of Health Research (DHR) and Director General, ICMR, Dr. Rajiv Bahl** stated that the current influenza situation is being continuously monitored and that **there is no cause for panic or alarm**. The influenza viruses currently circulating in the country are consistent with the seasonal pattern observed in recent years.



The ongoing genomic and epidemiological surveillance through the network of **73 DHR-ICMR Virus Research and Diagnostic Laboratories (VRDLs)** has provided important reassurance.

The circulating **Influenza A (H1N1)** viruses have been identified as **A/Missouri/11/2025 (H1N1) pdm09-like viruses**. Hemagglutinin (HA) gene analysis places the isolates in **clade 6B.1A.5a2a; subclade D.3.1.1**.

Dr. Bahl informed that this lineage **has been in continuous circulation in India since 2025**. The genetic changes observed are consistent with the **normal antigenic drift** seen in seasonal influenza viruses. Such minor genetic changes occur routinely as influenza viruses circulate and, by themselves, do not indicate the emergence of a new or dangerous strain.



Dr. Bahl emphasised that the present observations therefore **do not indicate the emergence of a new influenza threat** and are consistent with the expected behaviour of seasonal influenza viruses.

Seasonal influenza, including Influenza A (H1N1), is **predominantly a mild and self-limiting respiratory illness** in otherwise healthy individuals. Common symptoms include: Fever, Cough, Sore throat, Headache, Body ache, Fatigue and weakness.

In most people, symptoms improve with supportive care and adequate rest and hydration. **The presence of H1N1 does not, by itself, mean that a person will develop severe disease or require hospitalisation.** Dr. Bahl said that while seasonal influenza is generally mild, certain individuals have a higher risk of developing complications. These include: Elderly persons, young children, individuals with underlying medical conditions or co-morbidities and persons with compromised immunity. He advised such individuals to exercise greater caution and seek timely medical advice if they develop influenza-like symptoms.

He also advised the public at large to follow routine respiratory hygiene and infection-prevention measures:

DOs:

- Cover the mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use an appropriate hand sanitiser.
- Stay at home when unwell and avoid close contact with others.

- Maintain adequate hydration and take sufficient rest.
- Consume a healthy and balanced diet.
- Seek medical advice if symptoms are severe, persistent or worsening.
- Follow medical advice regarding testing or treatment.

Don'ts:

- Do not panic because of the detection of H1N1.
- Do not take antivirals or antibiotics without medical advice.
- Avoid close contact with others while symptomatic.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

The Union Health Ministry, DHR, ICMR and NCDC are maintaining **continuous epidemiological, virological and genomic surveillance** to monitor influenza trends across the country. The extensive VRDL network enables timely detection and characterisation of circulating respiratory viruses and helps public health authorities respond appropriately to any emerging trends.

The surveillance mechanism will continue to closely track changes in influenza activity, circulating strains and disease severity.

The current evidence, however, **does not indicate any unusual change in the behaviour of H1N1 influenza or the emergence of a new strain.**

The public is therefore advised to remain **informed and vigilant, but not alarmed**. Seasonal influenza is a familiar and routinely monitored respiratory infection, and adherence to simple preventive measures, timely medical consultation when required, and avoidance of unnecessary medication can help protect individuals and communities.

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HFW/ Update on Influenza A (H1N1) virus surveillance /25 August 2026/3

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