What is the situation in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region?

To date, WHO has been informed of 28 laboratory-confirmed cases of human infection with new influenza A(H1N1) virus from six Member States in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: Bahrain (1 case), Egypt (3 cases), Kuwait (18 cases), Lebanon (3 cases), Saudi Arabia (2 cases) and United Arab Emirates (1 case).

What does WHO recommend at this stage?

Response to influenza A(H1N1) and mitigation of the current threat to public health is everyone's responsibility and requires full cooperation from the public, media, health authorities and all concerned stakeholders. Health authorities in all countries of the Region have started implementation of their pandemic preparedness plans and have enhanced surveillance mechanisms in the interests of a rapid response to the outbreak. However, it is very important to note that public behaviour can positively or negatively affect the magnitude and outcome of the influenza A (H1N1) outbreak. In the absence of a vaccine for influenza A(H1N1) to date, WHO’s message to the public is to be vigilant and practise general preventive measures for influenza to prevent infection.

How can the people protect themselves and others from getting influenza A(H1N1)?

To prevent infection, people should cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing and sneezing, dispose of the tissue properly immediately after use and wash their hands regularly with soap and water. It is strongly recommended to avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and have fever and cough. Those who have influenza-like symptoms should seek medical advice immediately.