

# thecornerstone

## Carnival **Safety** Tips

Trinidad and Tobago is now well into the throes of Carnival season – one of the “cornerstones” of our culture – and in this issue of The RGM Cornerstone, we will remind you of the steps we take in our buildings to ensure that you, our tenants, remain safe and comfortable throughout the minor disruptions and inconveniences that our national festival brings, especially since our buildings are located in the heart of the Carnival action:

1. Security fencing is installed around the perimeter of our buildings (usually a week or two before Carnival Monday and Tuesday)
2. Access to the buildings – and basement parking in particular – is restricted from Carnival Friday evening
3. The security deployment remains the same, but instructions are given to be increasingly vigilant for any activity that may compromise the safety and security of our facilities over the Carnival weekend

We do our part to keep our buildings safe and you should do yours to keep yourself (and your family and friends) safe if you are participating in “the greatest show on earth”:

1. If you are drinking, designate a driver
2. Do not accept drinks from strangers; keep a close eye on bartenders who are mixing your drinks
3. Be ready to get into your car quickly; lock your doors the minute you are inside
4. Be aware of other vehicles on the road – especially if you are traveling late at night – to ensure that you are not being followed
5. Be careful of people loitering near traffic lights; use an alternative route if you are concerned, since breaking red lights is a traffic offence



6. Travel in groups, especially when arriving or leaving venues late at night
7. Keep the valuables to a minimum – take it easy on the “bling”; do not display large sums of money
8. Carry a form of identification with you
9. Ensure that your home is securely locked if you are either playing ‘mas or going away for the Carnival weekend
10. Arrange for a friend to turn on lights and collect the newspapers (failure to do so signals that no-one is at home)
11. If you are bringing your children into the city to enjoy the celebrations, ensure that they know key information (their name, address, your name and contact number) just in case they get lost – even better to never let them out of your sight, even to go to the bathroom

Following these simple tips should give you the peace of mind to enjoy a safe Carnival!

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## No. 5 Queen's Park West: A HISTORY

Almost thirteen years ago, the historical, grand art deco building at 5 Queen's Park West, Port of Spain, saw the end of an era with the sale of the famous Queen's Park Hotel. The epitome of style, elegance and grace, it was once the premiere hotel in the Caribbean. In closing its doors to travelers, it reopened them to businesspeople as it was transformed into the prestigious headquarters of (then) AMOCO Trinidad Ltd., now BPTT

The genesis of this building can be traced back to over a century ago, when businessman Edgar Tripp recognised the vast potential of the location. Its address back then (1885) was cited as the corner of 11 Wellington Terrace and 4 Tranquility Lands in North Port of Spain, a prime location that offered an idyllic view of Queen's Park Savannah backed by the lush mountains of the Northern Range.

The original property (then a two-storey house), which had been designed by the illustrious architect George Brown, was owned and occupied by the Honourable Frederick Warner, a member of the top echelon of the day's society. Construction on the residence was completed in 1882, soon after Brown had finished building the neighbouring Boos residence on Cipriani Boulevard.

Eight years later, an announcement in the Port of Spain Gazette heralded the formation of a company for the purpose of erecting an hotel that was to be known as the Queen's Park Hotel. Seven enterprising businessmen, including Barrister-at-Law, Edgar Agostini, constituted the company and in 1893 issued share capital in the sum of twenty thousand pounds with which to purchase the site. In 1894, with renovations and extensions complete, the stately home began its new life – accompanied by great fanfare – as a world-class hotel.

The move was quite a revolutionary one for its time, since the Savannah and its immediate environs were an up-market residential area (think the Magnificent Seven); most hotels at the time were located in downtown Port of Spain. Any hotel that wanted to thrive in this neighbourhood needed to live up to the pedigree, so the focus was on luxury: 50 rooms on the upper floor, 30 bedrooms and 20 dressing rooms with all the appurtenances deemed necessary at the time. The move paid off – not only was the hotel exceedingly popular with tourists and visiting dignitaries, but it also quickly became the centre of social events of the day –

many young ladies made their debut into society at the Empire Society's Annual Dinner and Dance, hosted at the hotel.

In 1935, the hotel was given a more modern facelift by its new shareholders. Master Builder Tookie Collins undertook the job of knocking the heart out of the original structure: what emerged was a five-storey building with little resemblance to its predecessor. The new Art Deco façade was high and stark white, majestically rising over its neighbors, larger than anything previously seen in Trinidad and Tobago and indeed, the region. This fairly new design style emphasized classical lines and slender, symmetrical, geometric forms. Its elegant, streamlined finish was perfectly matched to the genteel tone that Queen's Park Hotel embodied. Then came World War II. Despite its previous prosperity, the hotel was unable to weather the adverse wartime conditions. Additional costs were incurred in extending the original building, and the acquisition of twelve acres of the Champs Elysee Estate was a serious financial strain. When, in 1954, the effects of the hotel's financial woes continued, board member J.B. Fernandes offered to purchase controlling interest in the company. His offer was accepted, but a series of successive misfortunes plummeted the hotel into further financial decline. The coup de grâce appeared to be the 1990 attempted coup of 1990: in March 1993, almost a century after it began operations, the Queen's Park Hotel ceased operations.

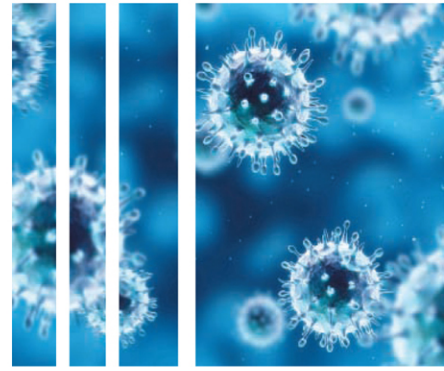
This grand old dame of Trinbagonian architecture sat in relative obscurity until 1996 when it was acquired by RGM. There was much concern that even in the midst of adapting the building to house commercial offices, that its historical and architectural integrity would be maintained – both the client and the developers, recognising the intrinsic value of the building, decided to preserve the flavour of this fine building. While the existing structure was demolished for safety reasons, the façade has reemerged in all its glory in the new edifice.

Queen's Park Hotel will always be a part of the collective memory of many generations of Trinbagonians and thanks to RGM, this cherished landmark, which once hosted an array of A-list international celebrities (violinist Jascha Heifitz, boxing great Joe Louis, actor Robert Mitchum and H.R.H. the Duke of Kent and his wife who honeymooned there), will assume its rightful place in our built environment, even as it develops into the future.

*With many thanks to Natasha Ramnauth for the original article.*

# What you **need to know** about H1N1

H1N1 HAS LITERALLY BECOME A FOUR-LETTER WORD – AND NOT JUST TO US HERE IN THE CARIBBEAN! SOON AFTER THE FLU (INITIALLY CALLED SWINE FLU) WAS FIRST DETECTED IN MEXICO IN APRIL 2009, THE OUTBREAK WAS DEEMED SEVERE ENOUGH TO BE CONSIDERED A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY BY GOVERNMENTS AND HEALTH AGENCIES, WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION OFFICIALLY NAMING IT A PANDEMIC BY JUNE.



While there has been some degree of fear mongering and misinformation by international mainstream media, drug companies and the like, there is no arguing with the fact that contracting the Influenza A virus subtype H1N1 has the potential to be fatal, making it the first global pandemic in 41 years. This is a flu strain to be taken seriously. What makes it so dangerous is the fact that this otherwise unremarkable pig respiratory disease has mutated to the point where it can be easily passed between humans by coughing and sneezing.

An online Flu Tracker map created by Rhiza Labs (<http://flutracker.rhizalabs.com/>) cites the number of confirmed or probable cases of the virus in Trinidad and Tobago as 124, with one fatality, but the webpage makes it clear that the data is an aggregate. In reality, the number of local H1N1 deaths is higher – particularly if you factor in deaths from complications due to the virus – which begs the question: How best to avoid contracting H1N1 when everyday life requires you to be out in the world – working, meeting with clients, perhaps traveling for business or on holiday with your family, dropping off and collecting your children from school (a long-established bastion of flu germs)? There are a few very simple measures you can take, so that even if you happen to come into contact with the virus, chances are it will not proliferate in your system.

1. **Wash your hands.** And do it often and well. Warm water is obviously better than cold, as the heat may help to ward off germs, and use soap – one with antibacterial properties is a plus. Make sure to scrub properly, front and back, up to your wrists, in between fingers and under your nails.
2. **Keep your hands off.** Even if your hands are clean, avoid touching your face (especially your lips, nose and eyes) with them, putting your fingers in your mouth, even absent-mindedly chewing on the tip of a pen during a meeting. Avoiding hand contact with areas through which the virus can pass is one of the best ways to avoid contamination.
3. **Sleep.** Not while on the job, obviously – but getting a good eight hours worth of snooze time helps boost your immune system so that your body is in a better position to fight off disease.
4. **Eat well.** By “well”, we mean healthily – a proper, balanced diet full of the right amounts of all the necessary food groups. Fast food is not recommended, and you should eat three good meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) along with a few healthy snacks (raisins, walnuts, yogurt) in between. And, of course, wash it all down with the recommended 8 glasses of water a day.
5. **Give yourself a boost.** You can increase the level of your natural immunity with foods that are rich in Vitamin C, such as broccoli, cabbage, tomatoes and citrus fruit. If you feel that is still not enough, take a Vitamin C supplement, but make sure you are also getting enough Zinc, as this helps to boost absorption.
6. **Gargle.** Yes, this old-fashioned solution is still effective, for warding off sore throats and curbing the proliferation of flu viruses. Warm salt water (or a mouthwash like Listerine) can help stop the virus in its tracks, especially since it takes 2-3 days after initial infection for the virus to become well established in your system (as with any flu virus). This is an easy and highly effective prevention method.
7. **Know that the nose knows.** You can extend the positive effects of the warm salt water by using it on your nostrils as well. Just use a syringe to administer the drops and inhale. Normal saline solution can also be used and is available at most pharmacies.
8. **Take time for tea.** Warm (or hot!) drinks help to wash away viruses from the throat area and direct them into the stomach where they cannot survive – just one of the reasons why chicken soup seems to be such a popular “cure” for the common cold. So if you enjoy a cup of chamomile or a steamy espresso, now’s the time to indulge!
9. **Stay home.** It’s simply the right thing to do if you’re feeling flu-like symptoms (especially fever, which is when you are most contagious), and you should certainly keep your children home from school if they are sick as well. It is irresponsible to put others at risk and employers and principals should recognize that. Even if it’s not the H1N1 virus, nobody wants your germs.
10. **Open up.** It may be difficult to do in air conditioned offices, but it’s good to open up a window from time to time and let some fresh air circulate, rather than subject yourself to constantly breathing in recycled air. And while you’re at it, use your lunch hour as an opportunity to get outside and breathe in some fresh air as well.



## ... about H1N1 (continued)

11. **Take it off.** Your clothes, that is – as soon as you reach home – and toss them in the laundry basket. Wash off the day (and its germs) by taking a shower and have your family do the same. You'll feel like new (healthy!) people.
12. **Scrub those surfaces.** Germs can proliferate on objects we use every day – door handles, computer keyboards, kitchen counters – so it's best to ensure that those surfaces are kept sanitary, both at work and at home. Chances are your office is cleaned once a day after-hours, so if that's not sanitary enough for you, keep a pack of wet wipes close at hand and use one every time you need to open a door, etc. Antibacterial gels are also quite effective and come in handy as a sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
13. **Vaccinate?** There has been some controversy over the safety of the H1N1 vaccine, as some undesirable side effects have been reported. The Ministry of Health in Trinidad and Tobago has not yet made it clear how it plans to distribute the vaccine doses it already has, but it is best for each individual to make his own decision about whether or not immunization is an option. Bear in mind that the vaccination

is not designed for children younger than 6 months of age. People designated as "high risk" for H1N1 include:

- Young people and seniors
- Pregnant women
- Medical workers
- People who suffer from underlying medical conditions

Of course, being a flu virus, H1N1 may produce symptoms that look like any other influenza, but you should contact your healthcare provider immediately if you display any of the following symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing
- Blue or grayish coloring to the skin
- Dehydration
- Appearance of improvement of symptoms only to relapse or get worse

In terms of an anti-viral treatment for H1N1, Tamiflu is the brand name on everyone's lips, but a medical professional/the Ministry of Health will be better able to advise about its availability, effectiveness and any possible side effects.

## We've got space!

IS YOUR BUSINESS EXPANDING? DO YOU HAVE A COLLEAGUE OR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE WHO NEEDS A NEW OFFICE ADDRESS? YOU KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT RGM IS A GREAT LANDLORD, SO WHY NOT CONSIDER ANY OF OUR NEW LOCATIONS?

### ALBION PLAZA

Victoria Avenue, Port of Spain  
1st Floor – 2,780 sq. ft.  
Available Immediately

### PRINCES' COURT

Corner, Keate & Pembroke Streets, Port of Spain  
Ground, 5,985 sq. ft.  
with option to lease outfitted space  
Available Immediately

### NEWTOWN CENTRE

Maraval Road, Port of Spain  
Ground, 4th, 5th & 6th Floors – 36,880 sq. ft.  
Available for outfitting immediately

All of the preceding sites are Class "A" office space, centrally located with underground parking.

### CHANCERY LANE

5,500 sq. ft.  
Available Immediately  
Elegantly renovated building in fenced, secure area with on-site parking.

All spaces are listed with real estate agents; for further information please contact Anya Steuart at (868) 625.6505, ext. 24.