

# 'Outbreaks Near Me' app now available for Android mobile phones

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(PhysOrg.com) -- "Outbreaks Near Me," an up-to-the-minute disease-tracking system released as an iPhone application in September, is now available for use on Android mobile phones, greatly increasing the number of people who can participate in the Outbreaks Near Me network.

Created by researchers at the MIT Media Lab in collaboration with the Informatics Program at Children's Hospital Boston, the application lets users track and report outbreaks of infectious diseases, such as H1N1 (swine flu), with their mobile phones in real time.

Outbreaks Near Me builds upon HealthMap, an online resource that collects, filters, maps, and disseminates information about [emerging infectious diseases](#). The system is updated hourly, using both general news media and [public health](#) sources around the world. The app provides a contextualized view of a user's specific location — pinpointing outbreaks that have been reported in the vicinity. It also allows users to search for additional [outbreak](#) information by location, disease, source, or date, providing important information for international travelers, public health professionals, and the general public.

Like the iPhone app, the Android version also allows users to submit an outbreak report to the HealthMap system from anywhere in the world, for review and eventual posting by the HealthMap team. Information on outbreaks can be delivered rapidly via alerts to the user's mobile phone

or e-mail.

“We have already had more than 100,000 users in the three months the app has been available for the [iPhone](#),” says HealthMap co-founder Clark Freifeld, a PhD student at the MIT Media Lab and research [software developer](#) in the Children’s Hospital Informatics Program.

“With the release of the Android version, it will be accessible to many more people, both in the U.S. and around the world. Because Android is an [open platform](#), going forward we expect it will see high adoption in developing countries, areas vital to our efforts and often underserved by traditional disease reporting systems.”

The app was developed for Android 2.0, and tested on the Motorola Droid phone, released in early November.

“With H1N1 still well above epidemic levels in the United States, we are seeking creative ways to apply digital technology to both disseminate and gather information on infectious disease outbreaks,” says HealthMap co-founder John Brownstein, PhD, assistant professor in the Children’s Hospital Informatics Program. “The hope is that by engaging users - who can use the app to view and even contribute to surveillance efforts - we’ll increase public health awareness around infectious diseases, and perhaps even see a more robust picture of public health formed by the information submitted first-hand from users around the globe using the app on their mobile phones.”

HealthMap, founded in 2006, collects more than 300 health reports per day in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Portuguese, Arabic and Chinese by mining the Internet - searching disparate data sources such as news reports, curated personal accounts, official alerts, blogs, and chat rooms — to track and map infectious disease outbreaks.

The HealthMap web site ([www.healthmap.org](http://www.healthmap.org)) averages 10,000 unique

visits a day, including regular users from the World Health Organization, the CDC, and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. During the H1N1 [swine flu](#) outbreak this spring, visits to the site rose substantially, with as many as 150,000 visitors coming to the Web site to search for information.

Outbreaks Near Me for the Android mobile phone is available as a free download from the Android Market ([www.android.com/market](http://www.android.com/market)).

Provided by Massachusetts Institute of Technology ([news](#) : [web](#))

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