



Novel H1N1 Influenza Update

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What is H1N1 (swine) flu? H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

What should I do if I get sick? If you live in areas where people have been identified with new H1N1 flu and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people, except to seek medical care. If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu in people? The symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 (swine) flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 (swine) flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 (swine) flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- *Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- *Bluish or gray skin color
- *Not drinking enough fluids
- *Severe or persistent vomiting
- *Not waking up or not interacting
- *Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- *Flu-like symptoms improve but then return

with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- *Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- *Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- *Sudden dizziness
- *Confusion
- *Severe or persistent vomiting
- *Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and cough

How does this new H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of this H1N1 virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else? Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick? There is no vaccine available right now to protect against H1N1 (swine) flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and door-knobs)? Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination? Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 (swine) flu? Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (brand name Relenza®) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these H1N1 (swine) influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

Novel H1N1 cont.

People with novel H1N1 flu who are cared for at home should:

*check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema

*check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications

*keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick. Do not go to work or school while ill

*stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone, except to seek medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

*get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated

*cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands

*wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from influenza.

Steps to Lessen the Spread of Flu in the Home: When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

1. Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible, especially others who are at high risk for complications from influenza
2. Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing
3. Have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water

or an alcohol-based hand rub. Children may need reminders or help keeping their hands clean

4. Ask your health care provider if household contacts of the sick person—particularly those contacts who may be pregnant or have chronic health conditions—should take antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) to prevent the flu

5. If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should attempt to avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick with influenza. If close contact with a sick individual is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable. Infants should not be cared for by sick family members

Placement of the sick person:

1. Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible.) **Keep the sick-room door closed.**

2. Unless necessary for medical care or other necessities, people who are sick with an influenza-like-illness should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel, **for at least 24 hours after fever is gone** except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

3. If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing

4. Have the sick person wear a facemask – if available and tolerable – if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.

5. If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant

Protect other persons in the home:

1. The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.

2. If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.

3. Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of influenza-related complications and immunity can be suppressed during pregnancy).

4. All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.

5. Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.

If you are the caregiver

1. Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.

2. When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.

3. Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub after you touch the sick person or handle used tissues, or laundry.

4. Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.

5. If you are at high risk of influenza associated complications, you should not be the designated caretaker, if possible.

6. If you are in a high risk group for complications from influenza, you should attempt to avoid close contact (**within 6 feet**) with household members who are sick with influenza. Designate a person who is **not at high risk of flu associated complications as the primary caretaker** of household members who are sick with influenza, if at all possible. If close contact with a sick individual is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable.

Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if symptoms occur

Source CDC