

Facts About: H1N1 Influenza

Also known as swine flu



Communicable and
Vector-Borne Disease
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About H1N1 Flu

H1N1 influenza is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. The difference between seasonal flu and H1N1 (swine) flu is that most people have little or no immunity to the new 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu virus strain. H1N1 flu has caused more illness in people under 25 years of age than older persons, which is unusual when compared to seasonal flu. Because it has spread to many countries, the 2009 H1N1 flu has been declared a pandemic influenza strain.

Signs and Symptoms Of H1N1 Flu In People

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue (tiredness). Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. As with seasonal flu, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection in people.

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

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- 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
- Fever with a rash

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

How H1N1 Flu Is Spread

H1N1 influenza is spread in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through airborne droplets created when a person coughs or sneezes. Close contact (within 3 feet) is required for virus spread to occur. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks.

How To Reduce Your Risk Of Getting H1N1 Flu

- **The best way to prevent H1N1 is by getting vaccinated once vaccine is available. The H1N1 vaccine does NOT protect against seasonal influenza, for which there is a separate vaccine.**
- **Wash your hands frequently to protect you and others from germs and other communicable diseases.** The best technique is to wash with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can

How To Reduce Your Risk Of Getting H1N1 Flu

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find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work because the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

- **Clean frequently-touched surfaces, toys and commonly shared items at least daily and when visibly soiled.** Disinfect commonly-used surfaces such as doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, telephones and computer keyboards at least daily using household disinfectants that state on the label that they are effective against viruses, carefully following product label instructions.
- **If someone in your household has been sick, use cleaning precautions.** Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash, and wash your hands after touching the waste. Wash bed sheets and towels with household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting; avoid "hugging" soiled laundry to avoid contamination; wash your hands after handling. Wash eating utensils in a dishwasher or with water and soap.

What To Do If You Suspect You Have H1N1 Flu

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms:

- Avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of liquids, and avoid using alcohol or tobacco. **Always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.** It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medication.
- Check with your health care provider:
 - if you are worried about your symptoms, if your symptoms become severe, or if your fever lasts more than 3 to 4 days. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or anti-viral medication treatment is needed for you or other household members.
 - before taking over-the-counter medications to relieve fever and muscle aches. Never give aspirin to children or teenagers with flu-like symptoms, particularly fever.

For More Information/ Web Links

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/>

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.flu.gov>

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: <http://www.dhmf.maryland.gov/swineflu/>

Prince George's County Health Department:
<http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/health>

Prince George's County Public Schools: <http://www1.pgcps.org/flu/>

World Health Organization (WHO):
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>