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H1N1 Influenza

What is H1N1 flu?

2009 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 worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Most commonly, human cases of H1N1 flu happen in people who are around pigs but it is possible for H1N1 flu viruses to spread from person to person also.

Is this H1N1 flu contagious?

Yes, The CDC has determined that 2009 H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

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
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause other chronic medical conditions to become worse.

How serious is H1N1 flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe.

How does H1N1 spread?

Spread of 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur 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 – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Are there medications to treat H1N1 flu?

Yes. The CDC recommends the use of tamiflu or relenza for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these H1N1 influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid, or inhalers) 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 symptom onset).

What can I do to prevent myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against H1N1 flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that can cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Things you can do to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses include:

- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or your shirt sleeve 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 sanitizers are also effective. Make sure that it is at least 60% alcohol.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, the CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

If I had a season flu shot, will it protect me?

No, the H1N1 flu is a new virus and was not included in the 2009-2010 seasonal flu vaccine. However, the CDC does recommend that persons receive the flu shot annually to protect against seasonal influenza.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you are sick, you may be ill for a week or longer. Influenza-like symptoms, include fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people.

- [The CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick. Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.
- 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.

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If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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 that improve but then return with fever and a 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 that improve but then return with fever and a worse cough.

How do I care for someone in my home that is sick with H1N1 flu?

- Check with your 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.
- The CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Ensure they get plenty of rest.
- Ensure that they drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep them from becoming dehydrated.
- Remind the sick person to cover coughs and sneezes. Remind everyone in the home to clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often especially after using tissues, after coughing, or sneezing into hands.
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill.
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs that might indicate you need to seek medical attention.

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Placement of the sick person

- 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 possible.) Keep the sickroom door closed.
- 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). This is to keep from making others sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.
- If persons with the flu need to leave the home (for example, for medical care), they should cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and wear a loose-fitting (surgical) mask if available.
- Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other persons.
- If possible, sick persons should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.

Protect other persons in the home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- 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).
- 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.
- 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 possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas (e.g., keeping windows open in restrooms, kitchen, bathroom, etc.).
- Antivirals can be used to prevent the flu, check with your healthcare provider to see if some persons in the home should use antiviral medications.

If you are the caregiver

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person.
- When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face.

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- 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.
- Caregivers might catch flu from the person they are caring for and then the caregiver might be able to spread the flu to others before the showing symptoms. Therefore, the caregiver should wear a mask when they leave their home to keep from spreading flu to others in case they are in the early stages of infection.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking antiviral medication to prevent the caregiver from getting the flu.
- Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact your health care provider if symptoms occur.

Can I get H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork?

No. H1N1 flu viruses are not spread by food.

Will a mask protect me from H1N1 flu?

Masks have been used as a preventive measure in the past, but it is unclear if a mask will protect you from H1N1 flu. At this time the best prevention is:

- covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze, wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze, alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective, make sure that it is at least 60% alcohol, avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Most importantly **STAY HOME IF YOU ARE SICK.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

Where can I learn more?

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services hotline number is 1-866-321-9571.

The CDC website will be providing daily updates regarding the status of the H1N1 flu investigation in the US. They also have information posted such as questions and answers regarding H1N1 flu. The web address is www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu.

Information provided from Centers of Disease Control
9.11.09.14:00 hours

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