

Important Facts about H1N1 Influenza and How to Protect Yourself

(H1N1 Influenza was formerly known as Swine Flu)

What is H1N1 Influenza?

H1N1 influenza (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a **new influenza virus** causing illness in people. The virus was originally referred to as “Swine Flu” because testing showed that genes from this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine).

Further study has shown that this **new virus is actually a combination** of genes from pig (swine), bird (avian) and human **flu viruses**.

This virus is **not** transmitted by food. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe. **You cannot get the H1N1 virus from eating pork products!**



Is this H1N1 virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

What are the signs and symptoms of this H1N1 virus?

The symptoms of H1N1 virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches (muscle aches), headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with this virus. Like seasonal flu, severe illness and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How does this H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of this virus is thought to be the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread 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 long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

The CDC believes H1N1 has the same properties in terms of spread as seasonal flu viruses: people may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms to up to 7 days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What can I do to protect myself from getting the flu?

Follow the 3 Cs:

Clean – your hands.

Wash hands often with soap and water long enough to sing the Happy Birthday song twice or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Cover – your cough.

Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and immediately throw it away or use your elbow or shoulder, not your hands.

Contain – your germs. Stay home if you are sick.

If you are mildly sick stay at home for 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (without the use of fever reducing medicine).

You should also avoid close contact with sick people and avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

What about flu shots?

Get a seasonal flu shot this year as soon as it is available in your area, unless you are told not to by your medical provider. **Getting a flu shot is the best way to protect yourself against becoming ill with the flu.**

The CDC is developing a vaccine for the H1N1 flu, which is separate from the seasonal flu vaccine. At first, the H1N1 vaccine will be available to those most at risk, such as pregnant women and children. As more vaccine is produced, it is expected that there will be enough for everyone. H1N1 vaccine clinics and shots will be provided by local health departments and some medical facilities, so watch for news on specific local providers.

The H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine – it is intended to be used in addition to the seasonal flu vaccine.



Public Health
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What should I do if I get sick?

Avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. If you are sick, you should stay home and be sure to drink plenty of clear fluids such as water, broth, and sports drinks (use electrolyte beverages for infants).

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 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

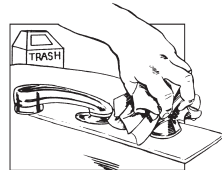
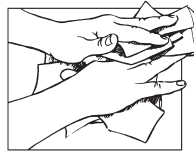
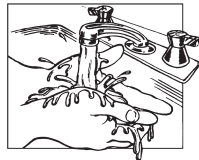
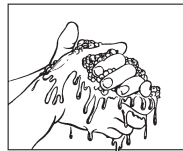
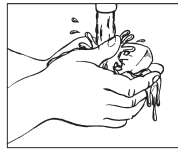
Are there medicines to treat infection with this new virus?

Yes, antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs are not available over-the-counter and are different from antibiotics. These drugs work best if started within the first 2 days of symptoms and can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. If you have symptoms, check with your medical provider.

What is proper hand washing?

Proper hand washing is the best defense in the spread of germs. It is important to do this properly and teach your children as well.

- Wet hands with warm water
- Apply soap
- Form a lather and rub hands together, reaching all areas of the hands
- Continue this for 20 seconds (enough time to sing "Happy Birthday" twice)
- Rinse hands well
- Dry hands well and use the towel to turn off the water
- If someone is sick in the house, use paper towels and throw away in the garbage after one use
- If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer gel and take it with you, so it will be available anytime.



If you have questions call:

*Illinois Flu Hotline
(for non-medical questions)*

866-848-2094 (English)

866-241-2138 (Español)

or call

*Peoria City/ County
Health Department
Communicable Disease Program*

309-679-6600

For more information, visit the following websites:

*Peoria City/ County
Health Department:*
www.pcchd.org

Illinois Emergency Preparedness:
www.ready.illinois.gov

*US Department of
Health and Human Services:*
www.flu.gov