

## **H1N1 FLU (Swine Flu)**

### **What is H1N1 flu?**

H1N1 is a type of influenza (flu) virus. Early on, H1N1 flu was referred to as swine flu. In 2009, H1N1 is causing illness in countries around the world.

### **The H1N1 flu virus is new.**

- It's a combination of swine (pig) flu, avian (bird) flu and human flu viruses.
- People are not catching H1N1 from animals. They are catching it from other people.
- Like the yearly seasonal flu, the H1N1 virus can spread easily from person to person.
- New flu viruses, like H1N1, pose a special threat. That's because people have little, if any, natural immunity.

### **What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?**

Symptoms of H1N1 flu may include:

- Fever (may be 101° or higher, especially in young children)
- Chills
- Sore throat and coughing
- Headache and body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting, in some cases

Like regular seasonal flu, H1N1 flu can be mild or severe in different people. In severe cases, H1N1 flu may result in breathing problems, pneumonia – and even death. Fortunately, there are medications that can help fight the H1N1 virus in people who are infected.

**A flu pandemic** means large outbreaks of a new flu virus like H1N1 are happening around the world. Flu pandemics can be:

### **Unpredictable**

For example, the first reported cases of H1N1 flu were in Mexico in the spring of 2009. The number of cases may rise and fall in waves before it finally dies out.

### **Mild or Serious**

A severe flu pandemic can kill many people. It can also disrupt work, school and other daily activities including the delivery of goods and services. To date, H1N1 flu does not appear severe in most people infected. But that doesn't mean it won't become more severe in the future. That's why officials are taking steps to help limit or slow the spread of H1N1 flu. For example,

- Officials are asking students and school staff with flu-like illness to stay home for at least 2 days.
- Experts are working on a vaccine. (It will take several months to develop and mass produce a fully effective vaccine.)

## **Do your part to prevent the spread of H1N1 flu.**

Here are some steps you can take:

### **Wash your hands often and well.**

Use soap and water. Scrub all surfaces of hands for 20 seconds. Use a hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available and your hands aren't visibly dirty. (It should be at least 60% alcohol.) Try not to touch your mouth, nose or eyes, too. (Germs often travel on hands.)

### **Cover coughs and sneezes.**

Use a tissue. (If you don't have one, use your upper sleeve — not your hands.) Throw the tissue away. Then wash your hands well. Stay at least 6 feet away from others if you are coughing or sneezing – or if they are. Coughs and sneezes can spray germ-filled droplets onto nearby people or things.

### **Get a yearly flu vaccine.**

It helps protect against seasonal flu, which can help you stay healthy. And stay alert for any news about the vaccine against H1N1 flu.

### **If you're sick, stay home!**

- Most flu viruses (animal and human) tend to cause symptoms like the H1N1 flu symptoms.
- Call a health-care provider to see if testing and treatment are needed, if you have severe flu symptoms. Also call if you've been around someone who has – or may have – the flu. (Call before going in, unless it's an emergency.)
- Follow all instructions, such as avoiding close contact with others and wearing a face mask.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids like water, clear soup or broth, and fruit juices. (Fever can dry up body fluids.)

### **Take these other steps, too.**

- Make an emergency kit. Include enough food, water, medical face masks or respirators and others supplies to last at least 2 weeks. Preparing a kit early is important. If you get sick, you may be unable to get food and supplies later. Or, they may not be available.
- Teach children how to prevent the spread of flu.

### **Stay informed and calm.**

Public health officials will keep us up-to-date about the latest developments. They'll also explain when to use face masks, avoid public places and take other steps that may help. Check the news regularly. You can also learn more from your local and state health departments. For official national information, visit or contact:

- [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)
- 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
- 1-888-232-6348 (TTY).
- Ledge Light Health District 448-4882 [www.ledgelighthd.org](http://www.ledgelighthd.org)