



H1N1 (Swine) Flu information

Questions and answers about the H1N1 (Swine) Flu

Q What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)?

A H1N1 Influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen.

Q Is this H1N1 flu virus contagious?

A CDC (Center for Disease Control) has determined that this H1N1 influenza A virus is contagious and can spread from human to human.

Q What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu in people?

A 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. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu.

Q How does H1N1 flu spread?

A Spread of this H1N1 influenza A 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 of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Q How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

A 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.

Q What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

A First and most important: wash your hands. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food. Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Q What treatment can I do?

A You will probably be sick for several days with a fever and respiratory symptoms.

- Continue to cover your cough and wash your hands often, even when taking antiviral medications to prevent spreading influenza to others.
- Call the office if you (or your child) experience side effects; i.e. nausea, vomiting, rash or unusual behavior.
- Take medications for symptom relief as needed for fever and pain such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®) and cough medicine. These medicines do not need to be taken regularly if your symptoms improve.
- Do *not* give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) or products that contain aspirin (e.g. bismuth subsalicylate—Pepto Bismol®) to children or teenagers 18 years or younger.
- Children younger than 4 years of age should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a healthcare provider.

Follow these home care recommendations:

- Stay at 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 fever-reducing medicine.)
- Keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- Dishes can be done in dishwasher or with hot soapy water.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Have everyone in the household wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing and sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

Q What if myself or my child seems to be getting worse?

A Seek emergency care if your child experiences any of the following:

- 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 worse cough

Q Do I need to take a prescription medication?

A If your doctor considers you high risk, you may be prescribed an antiviral medication. Your doctor may also prescribe medication to help with symptoms but these won't treat the flu itself.

Q What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

A If you are in a higher risk category, you may need a vaccination. These categories are:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- All people from 6 months to 24 years of age
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

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:

- 1 Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- 2 Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- 3 Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- 4 Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

Q How long can an infected person spread H1N1 flu to others?

A People with H1N1 influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possible for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

Q What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

A 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 and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

Q How long can viruses live outside the body?

A We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

This information is provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health and is subject to change. For updated information as it becomes available, please visit:

- www.flu.gov
- www.protectdupage.org
- www.dupagemedicalgroup.com