

2009 H1N1 Flu Information Sheet

What is 2009 H1N1 (swine 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.

Why is 2009 H1N1 virus sometimes called “swine flu”? This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America.

Is 2009 H1N1 virus contagious? CDC has determined that 2009 H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

How does 2009 H1N1 virus 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.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people? The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people include:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- fatigue

A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How severe is illness associated with 2009 H1N1 flu virus? Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

In seasonal flu, certain people are at “high risk” of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this 2009 H1N1 virus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at “high risk” of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
 - If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into the crook, or bend, of your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers* are also effective.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, **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.) Keep 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.

Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand sanitizers,* tissues and other related items might could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick with flu-like illness, **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.)

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.

Keep away from others as much as possible.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand sanitizers*. CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can 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; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

Examples of viable objects include: Frequently touched surfaces such as counters, doorknobs, light switches, elevator buttons, hand rails, railings, refrigerator door handles, sinks, coffee pots, vending equipment, computer keyboards and mice, and phones

Janitorial workers should be trained on proper hand washing procedures and should wear gloves while working. Cleaning can help control the spread of virus, but prevention starts with occupants. Encourage proper hand washing, respiratory etiquette and proper tissue and waste disposal among building occupants and discourage presence when sick.

What kills influenza virus? Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics), and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time.

For example, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used to clean hands. The gels should be rubbed into hands until they are dry.

Info from http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm