



## > H1N1 FAQ's

### What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 flu ("pandemic H1N1" and "swine flu") is a new strain of flu virus causing illness in people. This specific type of H1N1 flu was first reported in the U.S. in April 2009. H1N1 flu has now been found in virtually all areas of the world.

### Who is at risk for H1N1 flu?

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 can cause mild to severe illness. People at high risk of serious H1N1 influenza complications can include:

- Pregnant women, children and young adults age 24 years or younger.
- Anyone with chronic disease. This can include: asthma and other lung disorders; cardiovascular disease (except high blood pressure); kidney and liver disease; cognitive and neurologic/neuromuscular conditions; diabetes and other metabolic disorders; and hematologic conditions.
- Individuals with compromised immune systems, including immune suppression caused by medications or HIV.

### What can I do to protect myself against H1N1 flu?

- Clean your hands often with soap and water or a disinfecting hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.
- Try to stay in good health by getting plenty of sleep, drinking plenty of fluids and eating nutritious food.

### What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

Symptoms are similar to seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, headache, chills and general weakness. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. These symptoms can range from mild to severe. In most cases, symptoms last three to seven days, however you may be contagious for a much longer period.

### What should I do if I get sick?

- If possible, stay home when you are sick. The CDC recommends that: Non-healthcare workers stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the aid of fever-reducing medications.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze. Then throw the used tissue in a waste basket and clean your hands after disposing of used tissue. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your upper sleeve using the "Dracula Sneeze", where your forearm is pulled in front of your face to direct the sneeze away from you and others and towards the floor.
- Clean your hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. You can also use disinfectant hand sanitizer.

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Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO)

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- Try to limit contact with others to keep from getting them sick.
- Drink plenty of fluids, rest, and take medicine to reduce your fever.
- If you have other health problems, you may wish to contact your healthcare provider by telephone. Your healthcare provider can determine if you need treatment and/or a test for influenza. Talk to your doctor if symptoms seem severe or ongoing.

## How does H1N1 flu spread between people?

Both seasonal and H1N1 flu are able to spread easily from one person to another. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. People also can get the flu by touching something with the flu germ on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Symptoms usually start one to three days after a person has been exposed.

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

People infected with seasonal and H1N1 flu are most likely to infect others from one day before showing symptoms to 24 hours after fever resolves (without the aid of fever-reducing medication). The virus can be “shed” (or can be spread even without symptoms) for longer time periods by some people, especially people with weakened immune systems and children.

## How long can H1N1 flu survive?

On stainless steel and plastic, the influenza virus can survive 24-48 hours and can be transferred to hands through direct contact for up to 24 hours. On cloth, paper, and tissues – the influenza virus can survive 8-12 hours and can be transferred to hands through direct contact up to 15 minutes. Generally, the flu virus can survive on hands up to 15 minutes.

## Is there a vaccine for H1N1 flu?

The 2009 H1N1 vaccine will be expected to be available by mid-November. The seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against the 2009 H1N1 flu, so people who are at risk for both should consider getting both seasonal and H1N1 vaccines. The CDC has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These target groups include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6-months-of-age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, people 6 months through 24 years of age, and people of any age with chronic conditions (see above “Who is at Risk for H1N1”) that put them at risk for severe influenza complications.

## Are there any medications that I can take?

For most people with flu, the most important treatment is rest, fluids, and medicine to control fever. Most people with influenza who are not in one of the high-risk groups for serious influenza complications do not need a specific medicine against the virus. If, however, you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, it's important to contact your health care provider or seek medical care as soon as possible. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. 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 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 return with fever and worse cough



Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO)