

# H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) Quick Reference

## Frequently Asked Questions

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations as of September 3, 2009.

*The United States declared a public health emergency in response to the recent reports of swine flu. UMR wants to help you understand some important facts about the novel H1N1 Flu so you may take appropriate actions to help protect yourself and your family. We also recommend the [CDC website](#) or contacting a medical professional for more information. You may also access up to date information at: <http://www.flu.gov>*

*The information in this document is based on information from the CDC. The CDC site notes that much of the information regarding the novel H1N1 Flu is based on studies and past experience with seasonal (human) influenza. CDC believes the information applies to the new H1N1 viruses as well, but the information cannot be considered definitive until appropriate studies have been completed.*

### What is 2009 H1N1 Flu (previously known as swine flu)?

The virus involved in the current outbreak of 2009 H1N1 Flu is a respiratory infection caused by a type of influenza A (H1N1). This new influenza virus is spreading from person to person in a manner similar to the way in which regular seasonal influenza viruses are spread.

### How do you catch it?

The virus is spread primarily from person to person by coughing and sneezing. Transmission may also be possible by touching surfaces contaminated with the flu viruses and through contact with bodily fluids such as diarrheal stool from a person with the flu.

Note: The 2009 H1N1 Flu (previously known as Swine Flu) CANNOT be contracted from eating pork and pork products. In addition, there is no evidence that 2009 H1N1 Flu is spread by drinking community tap water or through contact with appropriately disinfected recreational water such as those found in swimming pools, spas or water parks.



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## During what period of time are people contagious?

According to the CDC, people infected with 2009 H1N1 flu shed the virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after onset of illness. This period of shedding can be longer in some people, especially children and individuals with weakened immune systems.

## Who is at risk of getting the 2009 H1N1 Flu?

Anyone who does not have immunity to this particular virus strain is at risk. Since this is a new flu strain, it was originally thought that there was no pre-existing immunity to the virus. According to the CDC there are indications that some older people may have pre-existing immunity. However, since it is not possible to know who may have pre-existing immunity, everyone who has not had the disease should be considered at risk.

## What are the symptoms?

2009 H1N1 Flu symptoms are very similar to seasonal influenza and generally include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also develop vomiting or diarrhea. Young children may not have typical symptoms, but may have difficulty breathing and a low activity level. Infants in particular may present with fever and lethargy and may not have cough or other respiratory symptoms.

## How can I avoid catching it?

People can take action to help prevent the spread of the virus.

- Frequent hand washing. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also helpful.
- Avoid contact with those who are ill. People who are at higher risk of complications from influenza should consider staying away from public gatherings.
- Avoid contact with surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus.
- Follow good general health habits which include: getting adequate sleep; being physically active; staying appropriately hydrated; eating a nutritious diet and managing stress.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- When available, the 2009 H1N1 vaccine will help prevent a person from contracting the 2009 H1N1 flu.

## How is it treated?

While it is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care, the CDC suggests the anti-viral medicines called Tamiflu and Relenza for the treatment and prevention of the swine flu virus, if needed. These medications work best if taken within two days of the development of symptoms. Recommendations for appropriate treatment are discussed below in answer to a separate question.

**IMPORTANT:** Aspirin or aspirin-containing products should not be given to any one aged 19 years of age or younger, including confirmed or suspected cases of swine flu due to the chance of Reye syndrome. Medicines like acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) may be used to treat the symptoms. Children younger than 4 years of age should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking to a health care provider.

## What should I do if I become ill?

If you are ill, you should stay home and avoid being with others to help control the spread of the disease. People with severe flu symptoms, young children, people who have chronic medical conditions, children and adolescents (age 19 and under) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza infection, children with chronic medical conditions or developmental disabilities, women who are pregnant, people who are 65 years of age or older, residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities, and those who are immunosuppressed should speak with their doctor regarding possible need for anti-viral treatment.

Symptoms that require emergency evaluation and medical care include:

- Trouble breathing, shortness of breath or rapid breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Stomach pain
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or frequent vomiting
- Getting better, followed by a return of fever and worsening cough
- In children, additional emergency symptoms that may happen and need urgent attention are:
- Inability to drink enough liquids to stay hydrated
- Fever with a rash
- Being so irritable that your child does not want to be held
- Symptoms which require calling Emergency Medical Services (911) include:
- Skin color turning blue
- Not able to wake-up your child or your child is not interacting with you

## Is there a vaccine available for 2009 H1N1 flu?

Currently, development of a vaccine for 2009 H1N1 flu is underway and is expected to be available some time this fall. It is expected that both live, attenuated and inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccines will be available. The number of doses of vaccine required for immunization against 2009 H1N1 has not been established but it is thought that some people, including pregnant women, may need two doses. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended the following populations be considered as high priority for receiving the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available:

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

Some groups should receive both vaccines and the CDC anticipates that both the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine and the seasonal flu vaccine may be administered on the same day. Simultaneous administration of inactivated seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccines is permissible, if different anatomic sites are used.

Individuals not in one of the "priority groups" can still receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine, as it is made available.

## Since the onset of the 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak last spring I have had an influenza-like illness, should I still get the vaccine?

If you tested positive for the 2009 H1N1 influenza A virus you do not need to get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. If, however, you had an influenza-like illness that either tested negative for the 2009 H1N1 flu virus or you were not tested for the virus, you should still get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine as recommended by the CDC.

## I am pregnant, or might be pregnant; is there anything special I need to know about the 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines?

- For both the 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines, pregnant women should get the flu shot, which contains the inactivated or killed influenza virus. The nasal-spray flu vaccines, which contain the live influenza viruses, are not approved for use in pregnant women.
- It is okay for family, household members, and other close contacts of pregnant women to receive the live nasal spray vaccine (if they are eligible).
- The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is being made the same way as the seasonal flu vaccine. The latter vaccine, which is already recommended for pregnant women, has not been shown to cause harm to a pregnant woman or her baby. Studies of the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine will start in September, but it is anticipated that the vaccine containing the inactivated or killed 2009 H1N1 virus (flu shot) will be safe for pregnant women.
- The side effects from 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine are expected to be similar to those from seasonal flu vaccines. Speak with your health care provider about any concerns you have regarding possible side effects or reasons you should not receive the vaccine. People who have a severe allergy to eggs or any other substance in the vaccine should not get it.
- Pregnant women can receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine anytime during their pregnancy.
- Studies are ongoing, but it is anticipated that some people, including pregnant women, may need two doses given 21-28 days apart.

The CDC website has more information on the 2009 [H1N1 vaccine and pregnant women](#).

## Will the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine be covered by my benefit plan?

It is important for you to check with your health care plan to determine if coverage of the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine will be provided.

Based on its analysis of current situation, The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended prioritizing the following population segments to receive the vaccine:

- pregnant women
- caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age
- health care and emergency medical services personnel
- children and young adults from 6 months through 24 years old
- persons aged 25 through 64 years who have underlying health conditions that might increase their risk for flu-related complications

Other population segments will be able to receive the vaccine, as it is made available.

## Will vaccination against seasonal flu protect me from the 2009 H1N1 flu?

The seasonal flu vaccine will not protect you against the 2009 H1N1 flu. Therefore, in order to prevent seasonal flu infection, it is very important that those persons for whom seasonal flu vaccine is recommended receive it as soon as it is available.

## Is it safe to receive both the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine at the same time?

The H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine. Each vaccine should be given to populations identified by the ACIP. The populations eligible for seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine are not the same, although there are some groups that should receive both vaccines. At the present time, the CDC anticipates that both the H1N1 flu vaccine and the seasonal flu vaccine will be able to be administered on the same day. Simultaneous administration of the inactivated seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccines is permissible, if different anatomic sites are used. However, simultaneous administration of live, attenuated seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccines is not recommended. It is possible that this recommendation may change once the safety and efficacy trials required by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have been completed.

## Is it safe to receive the H1N1 vaccine at the same time I get other vaccines?

Recommendations regarding the administration of the H1N1 vaccine in association with other recommended routine immunizations will be forthcoming from the CDC after the safety and efficacy trials required by the US Food and Drug Administration have been completed.

## How does the 2009 H1N1 flu compare to seasonal influenza in its manifestations and overall severity?

To date, several key differences have been noted between 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal influenza. These differences are summarized below:

- With seasonal influenza, adults over age 64 are at increased risk for complications. The information from the CDC on 2009 H1N1 flu is somewhat contradictory and attempts are being made to clarify the effect of this particular virus on those over the age of 64. Specifically, the CDC states that adults over the age of 64 do not appear to be at increased risk of developing complications from 2009 H1N1 flu. However, statistics from the CDC also document that, although those over age 64 are much less likely to become ill with the new flu, there is an increase in the hospitalization rate for that age group if they do become ill.
- It has been observed that the largest number of confirmed or probable cases of H1N1 flu have occurred in people between the ages of 5 and 24. There have been few cases and few deaths reported in people over the age of 64. The CDC is currently conducting studies to see if there is natural immunity to the virus in certain age groups. Early reports indicate that 1/3 of adults over age 60 have antibodies against the virus, while no children and few adults younger than age 60 have been noted to have any existing antibodies. However, at this point, it is still unknown how much protection against 2009 H1N1 flu a person may have from existing immunity.
- Finally, when compared with the seasonal flu, the 2009 H1N1 flu has been associated with an even greater risk of complications in those who are pregnant or have other previously recognized high risk medical conditions (asthma, diabetes, suppressed immune systems, heart disease, and kidney disease).

## What is a pandemic and what does a Pandemic Alert Phase 6 mean?

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak among humans. Pandemic phases are set by the World Health Organization as a way to advise governments, health ministries and other organizations about a possible pandemic. Pandemic phases are based on how an illness is spreading and does not address the severity of the illness.

A phase 6 alert is the highest level of a pandemic alert. It means that there is efficient and sustained human to human spread of the virus. During this phase, community level outbreaks are occurring in at least two regions of the world. While a phase 6 alert means that a global pandemic is underway, it still does not provide any indication of the severity of the disease or how individuals are being affected. During a phase 6 alert, international, national and local health agencies will continue to implement their plans to prevent the further spread of the virus.

## If I am traveling out of the country are there special precautions I should take?

On June 11, in response to the ongoing global spread of the 2009 H1N1 flu, the World Health Organization raised the worldwide pandemic alert to Phase 6. Over the course of the summer, H1N1 Flu has continued to be active both in the United States and internationally, particularly in Mexico, several countries in South America, Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, China and other parts of Asia. Before traveling, consider contacting the [U.S. Department of State](#) for information on the level of activity of the 2009 H1N1 flu in your area of travel and any precautions, travel restrictions, quarantine measures or screening procedures that may be in place.

NOTE: If you are sick with symptoms of influenza like illness, you should not travel.

## When should I get medication from my doctor?

Antiviral medicines are available for people 1 year or older, though the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has authorized emergency use of certain medicines in children under the age of 1. Many people who develop H1N1 Flu, but who are not in a higher risk group, have had a self limited respiratory illness similar to typical seasonal influenza. As a result, it is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care. However, antiviral drugs may be prescribed to treat those who become severely ill with influenza. You should ask your doctor whether you need antiviral medicines. Currently, the CDC's recommendations for antiviral treatment are as follows:

1. All hospitalized patients with confirmed, probable or suspected 2009 influenza (H1N1)
2. Patients who are at higher risk for seasonal influenza complications. (see next section for a list of people at higher risk for complications or severe illness)

For patients who are not in a high-risk group or not hospitalized, health care providers should use clinical judgment to guide treatment decisions.

Recommendations from the CDC for preventive drug treatment in people who are not ill:

Preventive treatment with either oseltamivir or zanamivir in people who have already been exposed to the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus can be considered for the following:

1. Close contacts of cases (confirmed, probable, or suspected) who are at high-risk for complications of influenza (see next section for a list of people at higher risk for complications or severe illness)
2. Health care personnel, public health workers, or first responders who have had a recognized, unprotected close contact exposure to a person with 2009 (H1N1) influenza virus infection (confirmed, probable, or suspected) during that person's infectious period

Preventive treatment for people who have not yet been exposed to the virus should only be used in limited circumstances and in consultation with local public health authorities.

Flu infections can lead to or occur with bacterial infections. In that case, people will likely need to also take antibiotics. A long or severe case of the flu that seems to get better, but then gets worse again, may be a sign of a bacterial infection. People with concerns about the course of their symptoms should check with their doctor.

## Who should be considered at higher risk for severe illness or complications with 2009 H1N1 flu?

People who should be considered at higher risk include people at higher risk for seasonal influenza complications including: pregnant women, persons with certain chronic medical conditions; persons 65 or older; children younger than 5 years old; children and adolescents (age 19 years and under) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza infection; children with chronic medical conditions or developmental disabilities; residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities and those who are immunosuppressed. (See below for more on [H1N1 and pregnancy](#))

While adults over age 64 are at increased risk for complications from the seasonal flu, the CDC states that they do not appear to be at increased risk of developing complications from 2009 H1N1 flu. Statistics from the CDC however do document that although persons over age 64 are much less likely to become ill with the new flu, there is an increase in the hospitalization rate for that group if they do become ill.

## How long can the virus live on surfaces?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces (such as cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks) and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

## What about the use of facemasks and N95 respirators?

Facemasks block large droplets from entering the user's mouth or nose. Unlike respirators, they do not seal tightly to the face. Facemasks are considered an alternative to respirators, but they are not as effective in keeping small particles from transmission. N95 respirators are made to seal tightly to the user's face and filter out small particles. Proper use of a respirator requires fit testing, training and medical clearance and should not be used by people who have facial hair.

Current CDC recommendations:

- People who are at higher risk of severe illness from influenza should consider using a facemask or respirator if they are unable to avoid being in a crowded setting in a community with 2009 H1N1 flu.
- People who are at higher risk of severe illness from influenza and who must be a caregiver to a person with influenza like illness should use a facemask or respirator.
- People with 2009 H1N1 flu or an influenza-like illness who must provide infant care should use a facemask during feedings and while caring for the infant.
- Any person in a non-health care occupational setting in a community with 2009 H1N1 flu, who has specific work activities that includes close contact with people who have an influenza type illness, and who cannot avoid the setting may consider using a facemask or respirator.

Health care workers who are caring for people with known, probable or suspected 2009 H1N1 or influenza-like illness should use a respirator. Under these circumstances, people who are at higher risk for severe illness should consider temporary reassignment.

Persons with confirmed, probable or suspected 2009 Influenza A (H1N1) should use a facemask, if available and tolerable when they are:

- at home and sharing common spaces with other household members
- in a non-health care setting
- in a health care setting but outside of their room
- breastfeeding

If a facemask is not available or not tolerable, a tissue should be used to cover coughs and sneezes. The CDC has more information on use of [facemasks and respirators](#).

## What advice is there for the care of a person sick with known or suspected 2009 H1N1Flu at home?

The CDC has updated information on [home care](#) of a person who is ill with the 2009 H1N1 Flu.

Things to think about:

- The sick person should not have visitors at home other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house with the door kept closed.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Consider use of a facemask or respirator by the selected caregiver if the caregiver is at higher risk for severe illness from H1N1 flu and no one else is available to care for the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. Pregnant women are at a higher risk of flu-related problems and resistance may be lower during pregnancy.
- If the sick person needs to be in a common area of the home near others, have the sick person should wear a facemask.
- If possible, the sick person should use a separate bathroom.
- If the sick person requires respiratory treatments using a nebulizer, treatments should be performed, if at all possible, in a separate room away from common areas of the home. Caretakers helping with respiratory treatments should wear an N95 respirator when helping with the treatments.
- Everyone in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, including after EVERY contact with the sick person or the sick person's room or bathroom.
- Make sure the sick person covers coughs and sneezing with a tissue and is washing their hands frequently, especially after coughing and sneezing. Tissues should be thrown in the trash immediately after use.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or use cloth towels for each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- Caregivers should talk to their doctor about taking anti-viral medicine to stop them from getting the illness.
- Caregivers should check themselves and household members for flu symptoms and call a telephone hotline or a doctor if they feel sick.
- Household contacts who are at increased risk for complications from the flu should talk to their health care provide about taking an antiviral medication to prevent them from contracting the illness.

## If I or a member of my family is ill with a flu-like illness, what can we do to prevent the spread of the disease?

In addition to the information discussed above, people who get a flu-like illness should stay at home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. If a person wishes to seek doctor's care, they should call their doctor before traveling to their office. Those with severe symptoms (for example, trouble breathing) should seek immediate medical attention. If someone must leave their home, he should wear a facemask or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue to help lower the chance of spreading the virus. Of course, those in home isolation should wash their hands often or use alcohol-based hand gels. As a rule, hand washing should be performed for at least 20 seconds. If others at home are likely to be within 6 feet of the ill person, the ill person should wear a face mask.

Additionally:

- Surfaces, (particularly bedside tables, bathroom surfaces and toys for children) should be kept clean by wiping them down using a household disinfectant as directed on the product label.
- Linens, eating utensils and dishes used by those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately but they should not be shared without washing thoroughly first.
- Wash linens by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting. Care should be taken not to "hug" the laundry prior to washing. Wash hand immediately after handling dirty linens.
- Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.

Finally, be sure to follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds, and other social distancing measures. Persons who are well but who have an ill family member with 2009 H1N1 flu can go to work as usual but should monitor their health daily and take the previously discussed precautions to help limit their risk of developing H1N1 flu. If they become ill, they should notify their supervisors and remain home.

### **If I am or might be pregnant – is there anything special I need to know?**

Severe illness associated with 2009 H1N1 flu has been reported among pregnant women and infants. These problems may include early labor or severe pneumonia. To help avoid catching 2009 H1N1 Flu, it is important for pregnant women to take the same preventive actions recommended for the general population. Additionally, the CDC recommends early treatment with anti-viral medications for pregnant women with suspected influenza illness. Treatment should begin as soon as possible and not be delayed while awaiting results of laboratory testing. If you do develop flu-like symptoms, be sure to treat any fever right away. Acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol) is the best treatment of fever in pregnancy.

Emergency evaluation should be obtained if you develop any of the following:

- Trouble breathing, shortness of breath or rapid breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Stomach pain
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or frequent vomiting
- Seizures
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- A higher fever that is not responding to acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Pregnant women who are close contacts of people with suspected or confirmed 2009 influenza A H1N1 virus should be considered for treatment even before symptoms develop. It is important, therefore, to contact your doctor, who can help decide whether testing or treatment is needed.

### **I have a baby at home. Are there any special precautions I need to take?**

Infants who are not breast fed are more vulnerable to infection and hospitalization from severe respiratory illness than breastfed infants. Consequently, the CDC encourages mothers who are not ill with influenza to initiate breastfeeding early and to feed frequently. In order to provide as much maternal antibodies as possible, the CDC also recommends avoiding unnecessary formula supplementation.

Additionally, only adults who are not sick should feed and care for infants, if possible. Women who are ill but are able to express their milk for bottle feedings by a health family member should be encouraged to do so. If a healthy adult is not available to care for your infant, the caretaker should wear a facemask while feeding and caring for the infant.

## **I am breast-feeding and have been prescribed an anti-viral medication for H1N1 Flu. Can I continue to breast feed my infant?**

Women who are breast feeding and have been prescribed anti-viral medications to treat flu-like symptoms should express their milk for bottle feedings by a healthy family member, if possible. Women who have been prescribed anti-viral medications to help prevent the flu because they have been exposed to the virus can continue breast feeding as long as they do not have symptoms of the flu. (For additional information on breastfeeding and 2009 H1N1 flu, see precautions discussed in the previous section.)

Note: The risk for H1N1 (swine influenza) transmission through breast milk is unknown, but reports of seasonal influenza infection in the bloodstream are rare. If either you or your baby is ill, the CDC recommends that you do NOT stop breastfeeding.

## **What should I do if I am prescribed anti-viral medications but cannot obtain them from my local pharmacy?**

If you are having difficulty filling your prescription for anti-viral medicines, speak with your doctor or contact your local health department. Either of these sources may be able to direct you as to where you can fill your prescription.

## **As the new school year begins, what will be the recommendations regarding school closures?**

In the late spring, the CDC no longer advised that schools be closed for a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1 Flu. In preparation for the 2009-2010 school year, the CDC has developed [guidance for schools](#) on how to decrease the spread of flu among students and school staff. This guidance also provides information for making decisions on a local level.

## **Do health care workers who are pregnant need to follow any special precautions?**

According to the CDC, pregnant women who are likely to be in direct contact with patients with confirmed, probably or suspected 2009 influenza A (H1N1) should consider reassignment to lower-risk activities. If reassignment is not possible, the CDC [recommends](#) avoiding participation in procedures that may generate increased small-particle aerosols of respiratory secretions.