Quick Reference
H1N1 Flu (swine flu)

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 H1N1 Flu (swine flu) so you may take appropriate actions to help protect yourself and your family. We also recommend the CDC Web site or contacting a medical professional for more information.

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

What is H1N1 Flu (previously known as swine flu)?
The virus involved in the current outbreak of 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: H1N1 Flu (swine flu) CANNOT be contracted from eating pork and pork products.

During what period of time are people contagious?
Humans are typically contagious anywhere from one day before the start of the illness to seven days after onset, but if symptoms last longer than seven days, a person should still be considered to be contagious. Children, particularly younger ones may be contagious for a longer period of time.

Who is at risk of getting the H1N1 Flu (swine flu)?
Since this is a new flu strain, it is likely there is no existing immunity to the virus. It is believed that everyone is at risk.

What are the symptoms?
H1N1 Flu (swine 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.

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For more information go to:
http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm
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 hand cleaners are also helpful.
• Avoid contact with those who are ill.
• 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 (or your elbow) 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.

How is it treated?

The CDC suggests the anti-viral medicines called Tamiflu and Relenza for the treatment and prevention of the swine flu virus. These medications work best if taken within two days of the development of symptoms.

Important: Aspirin or aspirin-containing products should not be given to anyone 19 years of age or younger, including confirmed or suspected cases of swine flu due to the chance of Reye’s 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. For children younger than 2 years of age, the safest care for flu symptoms is using a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus.

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. Young children, people who have chronic medical conditions, women who are pregnant, and people who are 65 years of age or older should speak with their doctor regarding possible need for anti-viral treatment.

You should also contact a doctor or nurse for urgent or emergency evaluation if you have:

• Trouble breathing, shortness of breath or rapid breathing
• Chest pain or pressure
• Stomach pain
• Sudden dizziness
• Confusion
• Severe or frequent vomiting
• Seizures

In children, additional symptoms that may happen and need urgent care are:

• Inability to drink enough liquids to stay hydrated
• Fever with a rash
• Getting better, followed by a return of fever and worsening cough

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
• Extreme irritability. For example, a fussy child who does not want to be held.

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Does the flu shot I received earlier this year protect me? What if I get a flu shot now – would that protect me?

No. There is no vaccine for this strain of flu at this time. People living in affected areas should take steps to prevent spreading the virus to others.

If I am traveling to Mexico, should I take medicines to prevent me from getting the flu?

The CDC recommends that people avoid travel to Mexico at this time. If you are planning travel to Mexico, follow the suggestions on the CDC Web site to lower the chance of infection. Please go to the following Web site for more recommendations: http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluMexico.aspx

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. You should ask your doctor whether you need antiviral medicines. The CDC’s recommendations for treatment are as follows:

Antiviral treatment should be considered for confirmed, probable or suspected cases of swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) virus infection. Treatment should be started as soon as possible after symptoms begin. Treatment is recommended for five days.

Pregnant women:

Pregnant women may be at higher risk for severe complications from H1N1 (swine influenza) and the benefits of treatment or preventive treatment with oseltamivir or zanamivir likely outweigh the risks of anti-viral use. Therefore, the CDC is recommending that pregnant women with confirmed, probable or suspected H1N1 (swine influenza) infection receive anti-viral treatment with oseltamivir or zanamivir. The CDC also recommends that pregnant women who have had close contact with suspected, probable, or confirmed cases of H1N1 flu) should receive preventive treatment with an anti-viral medication.

Preventive drug treatment in people who are not ill:

Preventive treatment is recommended for:

- People who are at high risk for complications from the flu and are household members with a person with a confirmed or probably case of swine flu.
- Health care workers or public health workers who were not using appropriate personal protective equipment during close contact with an ill confirmed, probable, or suspect case of swine influenza during the case’s infectious period.

Preventive treatment should be considered for:

- People who are at high risk for complications from the flu and are household members with a person with a suspected case of swine flu.
- Children attending school or daycare who are at high risk for complications of influenza and who had close contact (face-to-face) with a confirmed, probable, or suspected case.

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• Health care workers who are at high risk for complications of influenza who are working in an area of the health care facility that contains patients with confirmed swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) cases, or who is caring for patients with any acute febrile respiratory illness.

• Travelers to Mexico who are at high risk for complications of influenza (e.g., persons with certain chronic medical conditions, persons 65 or older, children younger than 5 years old and pregnant women).

• First responders who are at high risk for complications of influenza and who are working in areas with confirmed cases of swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) virus infection.

People who should be considered at high risk include: persons with certain chronic medical conditions, persons 65 or older, children younger than 5 years old and pregnant women.

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.

How quickly can they make a vaccine against this flu?

The answer to this question is unknown, but it may take many months to make and test a new vaccine. The current seasonal flu vaccine does not fight the H1N1 Flu (swine flu) virus.

How long can the virus live on surfaces?

It is known that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks.

What about the use of face masks and respirators?

If used correctly with other preventive measures, face masks (disposable masks) and N95 respirators (higher filtering facepiece respirators) may help reduce the risk of getting H1N1 Flu (swine flu). Face masks should be considered for use by individuals who enter crowded settings in areas where transmission of swine flu has been confirmed; however, the time spent in crowded settings should be as short as possible. Respirators should be considered for use by individuals for whom close contact (up to 6 feet) with an infectious person is unavoidable. This can include selected individuals who must care for a sick person (e.g., family member with a respiratory infection) at home. If possible, disposable face masks and N95 respirators should not be reused, and once used, should be discarded into the trash immediately after removal. Hand washing should be performed immediately after removal of the mask or respirator. For more information on the use of face masks and respirators please see the CDC Web site: http://www.cdc.gov/swine-flu/masks.htm.

What advice is there for the care of a person sick with known or suspected H1N1 Flu (swine flu) at home?

The CDC has just updated information on the home care of a person who is ill with the H1N1 Flu (swine flu) at home. You can read about this at: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance_homecare.htm.
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 respirator by the selected caregiver.
- 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 surgical mask.
- 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 and is washing their hands frequently, especially after coughing and sneezing.

- 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 might catch flu from the person they are caring for and then the caregiver might be able to spread the flu to others before the caregiver shows symptoms. Therefore, the caregiver should wear a mask when they leave their home to keep from spreading the disease to others, in case they are in the early stages of infection.
- 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 provider about taking an anti-viral 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 seven days after they feel sick or 24 hours after the symptoms have gone away, whichever is longer. If a person wishes to seek a 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.

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If someone must leave their home, he/she should wear a face mask to lower the chance of spreading the virus. If a face mask is not available, they using a handkerchief to cove a cough or sneeze is advised. 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 15 to 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.

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

The CDC states that women who are breast-feeding and have been prescribed anti-viral medications can continue breast-feeding while taking these medicines. They should, however, take steps to reduce the risk of transmission of the H1N1 virus to their infants. These steps should include frequent hand washing, possibly wearing a mask, and limiting close contact as much as possible.

**Note:** The risk for H1N1 (swine influenza) transmission through breast milk is unknown, but reports of seasonal influenza infection in the bloodstream are rare.

**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.

**My child’s school has been closed because of a confirmed case of H1N1 Flu. What can I expect?**

The CDC is currently recommending that if a school or childcare facility is closed due to a confirmed or probable case of H1N1 Flu, the facility should remain closed for a minimum of 14 days.

**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 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. For additional information go to: [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/pregnant-hcw-educators.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/pregnant-hcw-educators.htm)

For more information go to: [http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm)