

Questions & Answers about Novel H1N1 Flu Virus

Brought to you by Morton County Health Department

Some information in this document provided by CDC effective 10/23/2009

What is Novel H1N1 Influenza A Virus (formerly known as swine flu)?

Novel H1N1 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. On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

Why is novel 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. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.

Is this novel H1N1 virus contagious?

CDC has determined that novel H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 virus in people?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever (abrupt onset), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How serious is illness associated with novel 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, hospitalization and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 Influenza A Virus?

Yes. There are drugs your doctor may prescribe for treating both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 called “[antiviral drugs](#).” If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This flu season, antiviral drugs are being used mainly to treat people who are very sick, such as people who need to be hospitalized, and to treat sick people who are more likely to get serious flu complications. Your health care provider will decide whether antiviral drugs are needed to treat your illness.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

This season, there is a [seasonal flu vaccine](#) to protect against seasonal flu viruses and a [2009 H1N1 vaccine](#) to protect against the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus (sometimes called “swine flu”). A flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against flu infection. There are also everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like the flu.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

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- Wash your hands **thoroughly** with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.
- 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. (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.

What should I do if I get sick?

Individuals who experience influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, should contact their physician, who will determine whether testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. 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.

What are “emergency warning signs” that should signal anyone to seek medical care urgently?

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- 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
- Fever with a rash

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Can I get novel H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?

No. Novel H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get infected with novel H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Additional information is available at:

Morton County Health Department Website: <http://www.mtcoks.com/health/health.html>

CDC Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

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