

# 2009 H1N1 (swine) Flu

## **What is 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the 2009 H1N1 Flu (also referred to as "swine flu") 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 the same way that seasonal influenza viruses are spread.

## **If I get a seasonal flu shot am I protected from H1N1?**

No, you should still plan to get your 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine as the seasonal flu shot was **not** designed to protect you against H1N1 flu virus.

## **Can everyone get the H1N1 flu vaccine?**

The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is still in production. As a result of the anticipated low volume of vaccines, the CDC recommends that specific target populations receive the vaccination before others. Distribution of the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine will be handled at the state level and vaccine information and guidelines can change, so please be on the lookout for additional updates and communications.

## **If there is a 2009 H1N1 vaccine, can I get it?**

On July 29, 2009, the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices provided recommendations as to who should receive the H1N1 flu vaccine:

- Pregnant women, because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than six months of age, because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants less than six months old might help protect infants by "cocooning" them from the virus;
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel, because infections among health care workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce health care system capacity;
- All people from six months through 24 years of age, because there have been many cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza in children and they are in close contact with one another in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread; and
- Young adults 19 through 24 years of age, because there have been many cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza in these healthy young adults; they often live, work and study in close proximity; and they are a frequently mobile population; and
- Persons 25 through 64 years of age who have health conditions associated with a higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

If you are interested in getting the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, you should contact your primary care doctor.

## **If I am eligible to receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine, who covers the cost?**

For most people, charges by doctors, clinics, etc. to administer H1N1 flu shots will be covered at 100 percent of the allowable reimbursement rate (approximately \$21\*) with no copay or coinsurance. However, some self-insured benefit plans may choose to administer this benefit differently.

\* The cost of administration billed by your doctor or clinic may vary. The allowable amount is based on the allowable rate for your geographic area.

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### **Is the 2009 H1N1 flu contagious?**

The CDC has determined that the current strain of influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), most influenza-like illness around the world is caused by the new H1N1 flu virus.

### **How does the 2009 H1N1 flu spread?**

Spread of the H1N1 (swine) flu virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of the 2009 H1N1 flu?**

The symptoms of the 2009 H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu, and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with 2009 H1N1 flu. Like seasonal flu, the 2009 H1N1 flu virus may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. Severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection in patients with asthma, diabetes, significant obesity and chronic illness that affect the immune system.

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

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), most people with H1N1 flu are expected to recover without needing medical care. If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms and you are worried about your symptoms, you should contact a health care professional. Health care professionals can determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

Those who are sick should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading the illness to others. If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- 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

### **When can someone with the flu infect someone else?**

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick. That means that individuals may be able to pass on the flu before they know they are sick, as well as while they are sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.



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## **I came in contact with someone who has been confirmed to have 2009 H1N1 flu.**

### **What should I do? Should I stay away from work?**

You do not need to stay away from work if you are healthy. You should minimize the spread of germs by taking the following actions:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, especially after coughing or sneezing. The CDC recommends washing for a minimum of 15 to 20 seconds. Alcohol-based sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as germs are spread this way.
- Stay hydrated. This is the best way to avoid a compromised immune system.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- You do not need to stay away from work if you are healthy.
- Be sure to consult your doctor if you exhibit any of the following symptoms:
  - Fever (greater than 100o F or 37.8o C)
  - Sore throat
  - Cough
  - Stuffy nose
  - Chills
  - Headache and body aches
  - Fatigue
  - Vomiting and Diarrhea

If you are develop flu-like symptoms, you should limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Contact your manager concerning your company's policy on staying home or working from home. If you are the caregiver for someone in your household who has been confirmed to have 2009 H1N1 flu, take the following steps:

- Wear a surgical mask when in close contact with others. Drug stores or hardware stores stock them.
- Sanitize all exposed surfaces with appropriate cleaners frequently.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Throw used tissues in a trash can.
- Contact your doctor for advice about additional precautions if you are at high risk for complications.
- Stay home. Stay in one room and avoid close contact with others as much as possible.
- After you cough or sneeze, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

It is important to note that not all hand sanitizers are created equal. The CDC recommends choosing products that contain at least 60 percent alcohol.

To use an alcohol-based sanitizer:

- Apply about ½ teaspoon of the product to the palm of your hand.
- Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces of your hands, until they're dry.

### **Can I get 2009 H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork products?**

No, H1N1 influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get 2009 H1N1 influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

### **Are there medicines to treat 2009 H1N1 flu?**

Yes, antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can make the illness milder and make an individual feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within two days of symptoms).



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### **Should I be taking antiviral drugs?**

Antiviral drugs are only recommended in specific cases, including: people hospitalized with suspected or confirmed influenza; those with suspected or confirmed influenza who are at higher risk for complications (children younger than 5 years old – children under 2 years old are at higher risk for complications than older children); adults 65 years and older; pregnant women with certain chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions; and those younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

For all other asymptomatic populations, including those in the work place, public health officials are not recommending antiviral medications, even if individuals are exposed to a confirmed case.

### **How long can viruses live outside the body?**

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as cafeteria tables, doorknobs and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of becoming contaminated from these common surfaces.

### **Where can I get more information on the seasonal flu and the Novel H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)?**

Further information is available at:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>)
- World Health Organization (WHO) (<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>)
- US Government Pandemic Preparedness ([www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov))
- International SOS Preparedness Protocols (ISOS) (<http://www.internationalsos.com/pandemicpreparedness/>)

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