

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu)

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What is H1N1 Flu?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) 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, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

Are there human infections with H1N1 Flu in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with swine influenza A (H1N1) viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. As of July 2009, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates there are over 1 million cases in the U.S. The virus has now spread worldwide and has affected most countries. In Burlington County, the virus is currently considered "widespread" and is primarily affecting children and young adults.

Is this H1N1 Flu contagious?

CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 Flu in people?

The symptoms of 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 vomiting and diarrhea associated with H1N1 Flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 Flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 Flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How is the flu spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 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 by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?

No. Swine influenza is not spread by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the flu?

Adults may be able to spread the disease to others beginning one day **before** getting symptoms and up to seven days **after** getting sick. That means that you can give someone the flu before you know you're sick as well as when you are sick. Children may be contagious for longer than a week.

What can I do to protect myself against the flu?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against H1N1 Flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Are there medications to treat H1N1 Flu?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with H1N1 (swine flu). Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 48 hours of symptoms starting). If you think you have the flu, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should take an anti-viral.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider will determine whether influenza testing and 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. Currently, the CDC is recommending that people with flu-like illness stay home from school or work for 7 days or until 24 hours after symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.

If you or a loved one is having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion or severe and persistent vomiting, seek emergency medical care. For children, warning signs include fast or troubled breathing, bluish skin color, extreme irritability, not waking up or not interacting, fever with rash, and flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and a worse cough.

Where can I get more information?

- Your doctor, nurse or clinic
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>
- The Burlington County Department of Health at (609)265-5548
- The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) at (609) 588-7465 or on the NJDHSS Website at <http://www.state.nj.us/health>



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Talking to children about H1N1: A Parents Resource

Concern over H1N1 can make children and parents anxious because there is uncertainty about how severe this years flu season may become. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in people taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety regarding the flu requires providing prevention information without causing alarm.

Children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children may panic. Parents should reassure their children that everything is being done to ensure that people stay healthy.

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Your children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions. What you say and do about the flu virus and current prevention efforts can either increase or decrease your child's anxiety.
- If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine. Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.
- Let your children talk about their feelings and help put their concerns into the appropriate perspective.

Make yourself available.

- Your children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns and questions.
- Make time for them. Tell them you love them and give them plenty of hugs and kisses.

Know the symptoms of Swine Flu and how it spreads.

- Symptoms of H1N1 flu include fever, sore throat, and cough.
- Some people also have a runny nose, fatigue, body aches, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. The virus is transmitted through the coughing or sneezing of people infected with the virus.
- People may also become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouths or noses. The virus is not spread by eating pork or other foods.

Review basic hygiene practices.

- Encourage children to practice everyday good hygiene by washing their hands, by covering their mouths with a tissue when they sneeze or cough, and by not sharing food or drinks.
- These simple steps are very effective at preventing the spread of flu and other illnesses.
- Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over the flu and will help to reduce their anxiety.

Be honest and accurate.

- In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality.

- Don't ignore their concerns, but rather explain that at the present moment the vast majority of people, even those who are sick, will be okay.
- Children can be told that there are many ways to avoid the virus and that doctors can help to treat people who do get sick.

Discuss new rules or practices at school.

- Many schools will be enforcing prevention habits. This might include more frequent hand washing or use of antibacterial soaps; for older children, schools may temporarily limit activities where students are in close proximity or sharing items.
- Your school nurse or principal will send information home. Be sure to discuss this with your child. Contact your school nurse with any specific questions.

Avoid excessive blaming.

- When tensions are high, some people exert excessive energy trying to assign blame. It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus.
- Bullying or negative comments made toward another ethnic group should be stopped and reported to the school.

Monitor television viewing.

- Limit television viewing or access to information on the Internet. Constantly watching updates on the status of the flu virus can increase anxiety. Engage your child in games or other interesting activities instead.
- Developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children.

Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.

- Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promotes physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals, and exercise.
- Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities, but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Communicate with your school.

- Let your school know if your child is sick, and keep them home.
- Talk to your school nurse, school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker if your child is having difficulties as a result of anxiety or stress related to the flu. They can give guidance and support to your child at school.

Follow all instructions from your school.

Take Time to Talk

You know your children best. Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. However, don't avoid giving them the information that health experts identify as critical to ensuring your children's health. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. It is very typical for younger children to ask a few questions, return to playing, then come back to ask more questions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

Where can I learn more?

The CDC website will be providing daily updates regarding the status of the swine flu investigation in the US. For more information regarding H1N1 please visit

www.cdc.gov/H1N1

For Further Information Visit:

- The National Association of School Psychologists: www.nasponline.org
- The National Association of School Nurses: www.nasn.org
- The National Parent Teacher Association: www.pta.org

Federal Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key_facts.htm
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.hhs.gov/>
- U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov>