

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

H1N1 (Swine Flu) Virus

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What is H1N1 Flu and who is at risk?

The H1N1 is a type of influenza (flu) virus that causes respiratory disease that can spread between people. The H1N1 virus is thought to spread the same way the seasonal flu is spread, through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing. The virus may spread when persons touch respiratory droplets on hard surfaces and objects then touch their mouths, noses and eyes.

Children are a major source of the spread of disease. They shed the greatest amount of virus and pose the greatest risk of transmission. Furthermore, school settings mix children from different communities in a compact environment.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu?

- sudden onset of illness
- fever higher than 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees C)
- chills
- cough
- headache
- sore throat
- stuffy nose
- muscle aches
- fatigue
- diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain and/or exhaustion -- more commonly in children

Students and school staff should stay home when they have any of the above symptoms. Symptoms may last for up to seven days after symptoms first begin. Individuals with influenza-like illness should remain home for at least 24 hours after they are free of feverishness without the use of fever-reducing medications.

How to Prevent the Spread of H1N1 Flu Virus

The same steps used to prevent the common cold and seasonal flu virus apply when trying to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu virus. The following are some general steps that schools and families can follow:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice).
- If soap and water is not available, apply ½ teaspoon (nickel-sized) of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to the palm of the hand. Rub hands together, covering all surfaces until hands are dry (approximately 20 seconds).
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of the elbow. (Dispose of tissue immediately.)
- Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- Avoid touching the eyes, mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Keep children home from school, day care or other social gatherings if they are sick.

- School personnel or parents should stay home from work or other public settings if sick.
- Avoid crowded places where people are confined in an indoor space.

What to Do if Exposed to H1N1 Flu Virus

Anyone exposed to the H1N1 flu virus should do the following:

- If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.
- If you have a fever, difficulty breathing, a cough, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, you should talk with a health care provider by phone.
- Your health care provider will determine whether testing or treatment is needed.
- Before visiting a health care setting, tell the provider about your symptoms and that you may have been exposed to the H1N1 virus.
- Do not travel while sick, and limit your contact with others as much as possible to help prevent the spread of illness.

The above recommendations are subject to change as additional epidemiological and clinical data become available.

When to Seek Professional Treatment

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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

- fast breathing or trouble breathing
- bluish or gray skin color
- not drinking enough fluids
- severe or persistent vomiting
- not waking up or not interacting
- being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- flu-like symptoms improve, then return with fever and worse cough

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
- flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough