

KNOW THE FACTS!

H1N1 (SWINE FLU)

H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This virus is spreading from person-to-person, in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. This is a respiratory illness; swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food or eating pork products.

Public health agencies are closely monitoring the H1N1 flu situation. As scientists and public health experts watch H1N1 and seasonal flu currently circulate in the Southern Hemisphere, they point out that this is a rapidly evolving situation and guidance could change. Everyone is encouraged to visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ for detailed, up to date information.

WHAT CAN A PERSON DO TO PREVENT THIS ILLNESS?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness like H1N1 flu. People should use this time to understand proper hygiene habits to stay healthy:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not near by, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If a tissue is not available, use the inside of your elbow to cover your cough or sneeze, not your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Try to stay 6 feet away from people who are coughing or sneezing.
- If you are sick, you should stay home until your fever is gone for at least 24 hours.

HOW CAN I PLAN AHEAD?

Utilize this time to prepare yourself and your family by creating a family emergency plan and stockpiling emergency supplies.

- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues and other related items could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.
- If you are a parent, make plans for emergency child care in case your child is ill and unable to attend school.
- Have a week's worth of water, food, prescriptions, pet food and safety supplies.
- Make sure you have essential communication supplies on hand, such as battery powered radios, flashlights and extra batteries. A complete checklist is available at www.ready.gov.



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PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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H1N1 (SWINE FLU) (cont.)

IS THERE A VACCINE FOR H1N1 FLU?

Vaccines are the most powerful public health tool for control of flu, and the U.S. government is working closely with manufacturers to take steps in the process to manufacture an H1N1 vaccine.

WHEN WILL THE H1N1 FLU VACCINE BE AVAILABLE?

Making vaccine is a multi-step process which takes several months to complete. The H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the late fall. Vaccine availability depends on several factors including manufacturing time and time needed to conduct clinical trials.

If H1N1 flu becomes more prevalent and there is enough H1N1 flu vaccine for everyone, local health departments may decide to open Points of Dispensing (PODs) in addition to encouraging individuals to get the vaccine through their normal flu shot provider. A POD is a recognizable location in the community where medications or vaccines will be distributed.

WHO SHOULD GET THE VACCINE?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified several priority groups that are recommended to receive the H1N1 vaccination:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency services personnel
- Persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age
- People ages 25 through 64 years with chronic health disorders or weakened immune systems

IS THE VACCINE MANDATORY?

No, getting vaccinated against H1N1 is not mandatory. However, immunizations are one of the most effective ways to prevent serious illness in children and adults. Pediatric immunization programs in the United States have been quite successful in reducing the number of children affected by highly contagious diseases including measles, rubella, mumps and polio.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF H1N1 FLU?

Symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu:

- Fever
- Cough
- Headache and body aches
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Sometimes also nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

People experiencing such symptoms should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever and avoid contact with other people. You may want to contact your health care provider to determine if treatment is needed.

WHEN SHOULD I VISIT THE EMERGENCY ROOM?

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

Parents should call their primary care provider (pediatrician or family physician) before going to the emergency department.

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



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