



H1N1 INFORMATION

HEALTH CARE AGENCY • PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES • HEALTH DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Ten Common Questions about H1N1 (Swine) Influenza

1) What is the difference between seasonal influenza and this new strain of H1N1?

Seasonal influenza viruses generally are similar to viruses that have circulated previously, allowing people to build up immunity to them. The strain of H1N1 influenza virus that is circulating now has only recently been introduced to humans and therefore most people do not yet have immunity to it. Its symptoms are about the same as those of mild or moderate seasonal influenza (commonly called "flu").

2) What is H1N1 2009 Influenza (swine flu) and how is it transmitted?

H1N1 influenza is a respiratory illness that is spread in the same way that seasonal influenza is spread. It spreads from person-to-person when an infected person sneezes, coughs or touches surfaces (such as a door knob); then another person inhales the virus or touches a contaminated surface and then touches their mouth, eyes, or nose.

3) How can I avoid getting infected?

You can protect yourself from any influenza by washing your hands frequently with soap and warm water or by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. You should avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth and limit time around people who are sick (especially if they have fever and cough). Most importantly, people who are considered high-risk for getting the flu or complications from the flu should receive an H1N1 vaccination when it is available. It is important to note that a vaccination for H1N1 will not provide protection from the seasonal flu – a seasonal flu vaccination is required for that.

4) Who is considered high-risk for complications of the H1N1 influenza?

The following groups of people are at greater risk of complications from H1N1 influenza:

Children younger than 5 years old

Pregnant women

Adults and children with certain chronic medical conditions or who are immunosuppressed.

5) When will the H1N1 2009 influenza vaccine be available and who should get it?

2009 H1N1 Influenza vaccine is now widely available in Orange County; target group restrictions have been lifted and the Health Care Agency encourages all interested persons to get vaccinated.

6) What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza?

Most people with confirmed H1N1 influenza have a fever 100 degrees or higher and cough. Some have a sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea.



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7) What should an ill person do?

If you become ill stay home from work, school, errands, and limit close contact with others to keep from infecting them. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue away, or cough and sneeze into your sleeve. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Avoid contact with people until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medications. If you are at risk for complications of influenza, call your health care provider and follow their advice. In most cases people with H1N1 flu get better without medical attention. You should not need to visit the hospital emergency room unless your provider tells you to do so or you start to develop severe symptoms. Get plenty of rest, drink fluids, and take fever reducing medications if needed.

8) If I am ill with flu, do I need medication?

Call your health care provider about the need for medication. People at risk of complications from flu may be prescribed antiviral medication. Antibiotics are not effective against viruses. Most people will need only fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen.

Warning: do not give aspirin or aspirin-containing medications to children and youth 18 years and younger. Due to a small risk of complications, the CDC advises against the use of aspirin or aspirin-containing medications with children 18 years and younger who have chicken pox or influenza-like illness.

9) What should I do if someone I live with is sick with flu-like symptoms?

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, protect yourself and others by:

- Keeping the sick person away from other people as much as possible
- Having the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be near other people
- Reminding the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- Reminding everyone in the household to clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
- If you (or others) are at high risk for medical complications, ask your healthcare provider if you should take antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) to prevent the flu.

The provider may suggest the high risk contacts closely monitor themselves for early signs of influenza and then take medication if they develop signs.

Additional details on caring for a sick person are available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) H1N1 influenza web site: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm.

10) Will schools be closed if a lot of children start getting sick?

The CDC has announced that they are no longer recommending that schools close unless a school has such a high level of absenteeism it cannot operate. If this occurs, school districts will notify parents, students, and teachers through the local news media, just as they do for weather closures.

For more information, please call our Health Line at (800) 564-8448 or visit our web site at ohealthinfo.com.