

FACT SHEET

H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu)

What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)?

H1N1 influenza is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza among pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

Is this H1N1 flu virus contagious?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that this H1N1 Influenza A virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu in humans?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported vomiting and diarrhea associated with the H1N1 flu.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

Spread of this novel H1N1 influenza A 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.

Can I get H1N1 Influenza from eating or preparing pork?

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

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: wash your hands frequently. In general, try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious foods. Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the influenza virus. Avoid close contact with people that are sick.

Are there medications to treat H1N1?

Yes. The CDC currently recommends the use of oseltamivir (tamiflu) or zanamivir (relenza) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these H1N1 influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquids 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 2 days of symptoms).

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands frequently will help protect you from germs. We recommend that when you wash your hands—with soap and warm water—that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand gel sanitizers may be used.

What should you do if you get sick?

If you live in areas where H1N1 influenza cases have been identified and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you may want to contact your healthcare provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza testing or treatment is necessary.

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.

For more information on H1N1 flu (swine flu), visit our website at: www.lcdph.org.

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