

H1N1 Swine Flu



What you can do

What is H1N1 swine flu?

H1N1 swine flu is caused by a new virus. It first appeared in the United States in April 2009. The new flu quickly spread around the world, making it a pandemic form of flu.

It's called swine flu because parts of the virus came from a virus found in pigs. But parts also came from other animals and humans.

One scientific name for the virus is H1N1. It's often called H1N1 swine flu.

How do you get it?

H1N1 swine flu passes from person to person when someone who has it coughs or sneezes. People can also get it by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it.

You don't get swine flu from pigs or from eating pork.

What is pandemic flu?

A flu virus is pandemic if:

- **It's a new virus.** It takes time for people's immune systems to build resistance. So a new virus can quickly spread from person to person.
- **It's found in a large area of the world.** Experts declare a virus pandemic if it's affected people on at least 2 continents.

Once a flu is pandemic, officials can take quick action to help people:

- Prevent it.
- Get well if they get it.
- Avoid giving it to others.

How is it different from common flu?

Common or seasonal flu occurs every year, often in winter. Seasonal flu is less widespread and can be less severe than pandemic flu. **Here's why:**

- Many people have some natural protection or *immunity* against seasonal flu viruses.
- A seasonal flu vaccine is available each year.
- The vaccine protects people. They don't get the seasonal flu, or their illness is milder if they do get it.

Seasonal flu can be serious, especially if it leads to pneumonia. It causes around 36,000 deaths each year.

Is there a vaccine?

There is a vaccine for H1N1 swine flu. If demand is great, people should get the vaccine in order of greatest to lowest risk.

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers of children under 6 months old
- Health care workers
- Children and young adults age 6 months to 24 years
- Adults age 25 to 64 with health conditions that put them at higher risk
- Adults age 25 to 64
- Adults age 65 and older*

*Older adults may have some natural immunity against the virus.

You will need to get separate vaccines for seasonal flu and H1N1 swine flu.

What to Do

Good health habits help stop the spread of flu and other diseases.

- **Stay home and rest** when you're sick.
- **Wash your hands often.** Or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rubbed into the hands until dry.
- **Cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in the trash.
- **If you don't have a tissue,** cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve.
- **Avoid touching** your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Avoid close contact** with others (e.g., shaking hands).
- **Keep yourself healthy.** Eat well. Be physically active. Sleep. Manage stress.

How to Wash Your Hands

- Use soap and running water. Rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Wash your wrists, the backs of your hands, and the spaces between your fingers.
- Rinse your hands well.
- Dry your hands with a clean paper towel. Use the towel to turn off the faucet.

When to Wash Your Hands

- Before preparing food and eating
- After using the bathroom
- After handling objects used by many people, such as door knobs or shopping carts
- After coughing or sneezing

How will I know if I have H1N1 swine flu?

Symptoms are the same as for seasonal flu. They start 1 to 4 days after exposure. They may come on suddenly. **Watch for:**

- Runny, stuffy nose
- Fever, headache, cough, sore throat
- Chills, tiredness, muscle aches
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea

What if I think I have it?

Most people get better without treatment.

These steps can help with symptoms:

- Rest.
- Drink lots of fluids. Avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Take ibuprofen, acetaminophen or aspirin to reduce pain and fever. (Aspirin may cause problems in some people.)
- Stay home from work or school for at least 7 days after your symptoms begin. Stay home for a full 24 hours after any fever is gone and your cough has gone away.

Flu and Children

If you're caring for a child with flu, talk to your health care provider about safe medicines for pain or fever.

A rare but serious illness called Reye's Syndrome is linked to use of aspirin and some other pain relievers by children under age 18 who have flu or chickenpox.

When should I see a doctor?

Check with your health care provider if you feel very ill or aren't improving. **These people should see a provider:**

- Children under age 2
- Children on long-term aspirin treatment
- Adults age 65 or older
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic health conditions such as heart, lung, liver or kidney problems; sickle cell anemia; or a depressed immune system

What about anti-viral medicines?

Anti-viral medicines can be useful if taken soon after symptoms start. Your doctor must prescribe these medicines.

To learn more

These up-to-date websites include any new recommendations.

www.cdc.gov/h1n1
www.flu.gov

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