



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
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Protecting Yourself from H1N1 (Swine) Influenza If You Have Frequent Interaction with the Public

This document was created to advise the public on how to stay healthy as they perform their daily activities. Guidelines for healthcare workers are more stringent and are found elsewhere.

How is swine influenza spread?

The main way that H1N1 (swine) influenza viruses are thought to spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets from coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are sprayed through the air and land on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Influenza viruses may also be spread when a person touches cough or sneeze droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.

How can I prevent others or myself from becoming ill?

Routine actions are an important way of keeping yourself healthy.

These include:

- Wash your hands frequently (15-20 seconds with soap and warm water) or use 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizing gels
- Always cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and always throw away used tissues into the trash or cough into your elbow/shoulder
- If you have not washed your hands, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Do not share drinking/eating containers or utensils
- Avoid contact with ill persons if possible
- Monitor your own health

If you do become ill, stay home for at least 7 days (especially from work, school, or other gatherings of people) to keep from spreading illness. Avoid close contact (< 6 feet) with others if you are ill as much as possible, and wear a facemask if you are in contact with other people.

Keep surfaces at home and work (especially desks, phones, keyboards, door knobs, bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

Persons with underlying medical conditions who are at high risk for complications for influenza may wish to consider avoiding large gatherings. Contact your healthcare provider if you are unsure whether or not you are a person at high risk for complications.

What about facemasks?

What is a facemask?

Facemasks are loose-fitting, disposable masks that cover the nose and mouth. These include products labeled as surgical, dental, medical procedure, isolation, and laser masks. Facemasks help stop cough and sneeze droplets from being spread by the person wearing the facemask. They also keep splashes or sprays from reaching the mouth and nose of the person wearing the facemask. Once a facemask is put on, it can be used until it is removed from your face or until it is visibly soiled or wet. After a facemask is taken off, it should be thrown away into the trash.

Whenever possible, rather than relying on the use of facemasks, avoid close contact and crowded conditions. A facemask will not give complete protection from H1N1 (swine) influenza, but may help to control the spread from person to person. It is important when using a facemask to combine that with the above-mentioned actions. Facemasks are available to the general public through pharmacies and hardware stores.

Wear a facemask if:

- Your doctor has told you that you have H1N1 (swine) influenza and think you might have close contact with other people.

Consider wearing a facemask if:

- You are going out into crowded places and you live with someone whose doctor has told them they have H1N1 (swine) influenza. Limit the amount of time you spend in these crowded places and wear a facemask while you are there. For more information about caring for someone with H1N1 (swine) influenza at home visit the CDC website http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance_homecare.htm.
- You are well and do not expect to be in close contact with a sick person but need to be in a crowded place in a community with confirmed H1N1 (swine) influenza cases. Limit the amount of time you spend in these crowded places and wear a facemask while you are there.

What about respirators?

What is a respirator?

A respirator (for example, an N95) is designed to protect you from breathing in very small particles, which might contain viruses. These types of respirators fit tightly to the face. To be most effective, N95 respirators must be specially fitted for each person who wears one. Like facemasks, once a respirator is put on, it can be used until it is removed from your face or until it is visibly soiled or wet. After a respirator is taken off, it should be thrown away into the trash.

Whenever possible, rather than relying on the use of respirators, avoid close contact and crowded conditions. A respirator will not give complete protection from H1N1 (swine) influenza, but may help to control the spread. It is important when using a respirator to combine that with the above-mentioned actions. Respirators are available to the general public through pharmacies and hardware stores. If you have a heart or lung disease or other health condition (high blood pressure), you may have trouble breathing through respirators and you should talk with your doctor before using one.

Consider wearing a respirator if:

- You are well and you expect to be in close contact with people known or thought to be sick with H1N1 (swine) influenza (for example: taking care of someone sick with H1N1 [swine] influenza). Limit the amount of time you are in close contact with these people and wear a

respirator during this time. For more information about caring for someone with H1N1 (swine) influenza in the home visit the CDC website http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance_homecare.htm.

What about antiviral medications?

The state and federal governments do not recommend that individuals try to keep a stockpile of antivirals at home. Antivirals have a limited shelf life (they expire) and, as with other medications, should be taken under the supervision of a healthcare provider. They also may cause side effects.

For additional information regarding the most current H1N1 (swine) influenza recommendations please see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>.