



Novel H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You Midland Health & Senior Services

What is novel H1N1 (swine flu)?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

Why is novel H1N1 virus sometimes called “swine flu”?

This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.

Is novel H1N1 virus contagious?

CDC has determined that novel H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

How does novel H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus. However, a novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be ready for the public in the fall. As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against [seasonal influenza](#). There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with novel H1N1 flu, should I go to work?

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with novel H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.* If they become ill, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. [Alcohol-based hand cleaners*](#) are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, [CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- 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 might could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious

What is CDC's recommendation regarding "swine flu parties"?

"Swine flu parties" are gatherings during which people have close contact with a person who has novel H1N1 flu in order to become infected with the virus. The intent of these parties is for a person to become infected with what for many people has been a mild disease, in the hope of having natural immunity novel H1N1 flu virus that might circulate later and cause more severe disease.

CDC does not recommend "swine flu parties" as a way to protect against novel H1N1 flu in the future. While the disease seen in the current novel H1N1 flu outbreak has been mild for many people, it has been severe and even fatal for others. There is no way to predict with certainty what the outcome will be for an individual or, equally important, for others to whom the intentionally infected person may spread the virus.

CDC recommends that people with novel H1N1 flu avoid contact with others as much as possible. If you are sick with flu-like illness, [CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

What are the plans for developing novel H1N1 vaccine?

Vaccines are the most powerful public health tool for control of influenza, and the U.S. government is working closely with manufacturers to take steps in the process to manufacture a novel H1N1 vaccine. Working together with scientists in the public and private sector, CDC has isolated the new H1N1 virus and modified the virus so that it can be used to make hundreds of millions of doses of vaccine. Vaccine manufacturers are now using these materials to begin vaccine production. Making vaccine is a multi-step process which takes several months to complete. Candidate vaccines will be tested in clinical trials over the few months.

When is it expected that the novel H1N1 vaccine will be available?

The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. More specific dates cannot be provided at this time as vaccine availability depends on several factors including manufacturing time and time needed to conduct clinical trials

Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the novel H1N1 flu?

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel H1N1 flu.

Can the seasonal vaccine and the novel H1N1 vaccine be given at the same time?

It is anticipated that seasonal flu and novel H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day. However, we expect the seasonal vaccine to be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. The usual seasonal influenza viruses are still expected to cause illness this fall and winter. Individuals are encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available.

For more information and ongoing updates:

<http://www.midlandtexas.gov/> click "City Services, then click " Health Department"

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>

Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu>