

Novel H1N1 Influenza Information

- The H1N1 virus is a novel (new) influenza virus strain causing contagious illness in people, first detected in people in the United States in April 2009.
- H1N1 was called “swine flu” at first because it was thought genetically similar to flu viruses normally occurring in pigs. It actually contains genes from viruses that circulate in birds and humans as well.
- In June 2009 the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6, indicating that a global pandemic is under way. This designation reflects the spread of the virus, not the severity of the illness it causes.
- In the United States, most people who have become ill with the H1N1 virus have recovered without requiring medical treatment. A majority of those hospitalized have had one or more medical conditions that increase risk for complications, including pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, kidney disease, and immunosuppression.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expects H1N1 illnesses to continue for some time. The virus could cause significant illness with associated hospitalizations and deaths in the fall and winter 2009, during the U.S. influenza season.
- You should be able to recognize the symptoms and know what to do if you or people around you become ill.

Preparedness Is Your Duty

The Navy encourages all personnel to maintain a basic level of preparedness for all potential hazards.

You are encouraged to be informed about potential hazards, have a family emergency plan, and make an emergency preparedness kit.

Transmission

- The H1N1 virus spreads from person to person the same way that regular seasonal flu viruses spread—mainly by people with flu coughing or sneezing. People may also sometimes become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.
- People with seasonal flu may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms to as long as a week after they get sick. Children may be contagious for longer periods. Current information on H1N1 indicates similar experience.

Symptoms

- The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus are similar to those of seasonal flu—fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some also have diarrhea and vomiting.
- Seek medical care promptly at any of the following warning signs:
 - In children, fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish or gray skin color, not drinking enough fluids, severe or persistent vomiting, not waking up or not interacting, or flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
 - In adults, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting, or flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Vaccine and Treatment

- Vaccines effective against the H1N1 flu virus are in production. All military personnel will be vaccinated, and the vaccine will be available to all military family members who want it.
- Some existing prescription medications that suppress reproduction of viruses in the body are available. The priority in this pandemic is not prevention but treatment of severe H1N1 cases.
- The CDC discourages intentional exposure in hopes of gaining natural immunity through a mild infection.

Prevention

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also work. Rub your hands thoroughly; don't just get them wet.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth and contact with people who are ill.
- Cover your own mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Teach your children flu prevention hygiene.
- There is no reason to avoid normal water supplies, properly handled and cooked pork, or recreational water venues treated in accord with recommendations.
- If people in your area have been diagnosed H1N1 flu, minimize contact with others to the extent possible. If advised to stay home, leave only to seek medical care.

Flu in the Family

- If you are sick:
 - Avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness.
 - Consider wearing a facemask to help prevent spreading the illness to others in your household.
 - Remain at home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds, and other social distancing measures.
- If you or a family member has a severe illness or is at high risk for flu complications, contact your health-care provider or seek medical care to learn whether flu testing or treatment is needed.
- Redouble the anti-flu hygiene measures listed above, carefully dispose of used tissues, and use germicidal cleaners on appropriate surfaces.

Pandemic Preparation and Response

- Though the global nature of the current outbreak meets WHO's definition of "pandemic," no special preparatory steps are currently recommended beyond those listed above. Getting an emergency kit, making a family emergency plan, and staying informed are still the smart things to do. Periodically refresh the water and food supplies in your kit, as always.
- 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 similar related items could be useful and cut the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.
- If circumstances worsen, stay calm, limit exposure to sick people, stay home if you are sick, rely on local officials and health and government websites to stay informed, and follow emergency plans.

Travelers and Those Living Abroad

- Up-to-date H1N1 flu information for travelers is available at the CDC "Travelers' Health" website at www.cdc.gov/travel/content/novel-h1n1-flu.aspx.

Where to Find Additional Information

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu
- World Health Organization (WHO)—www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html
- U.S. Department of State—www.travel.state.gov/index.html

It's **your duty** to stay informed, develop disaster plans with your family, and have ready an emergency supply kit good for at least three days.