

MACOMB COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Novel H1N1 Influenza A

General Q&A

What is H1N1?

- H1N1 is the scientific name of a virus that causes infection of the respiratory tract, similar to seasonal flu. This new virus was first identified in the USA in April 2009.

Is the H1N1 flu the same as the regular seasonal flu that goes around?

- No the viruses are not the same, but the symptoms and signs are similar.

Why is it called swine flu?

- This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because initial 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.

What are the signs & symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The signs and symptoms are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu:

- Fever
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle and joint pain
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea

Is it contagious and how does it spread?

Yes, the virus is contagious. It is spread:

- Through coughing or sneezing by people who have the flu,
- By people becoming infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How long is a person contagious?

- People infected with seasonal and H1N1 flu viruses 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 with those infected with the new H1N1 virus.

How severe is H1N1?

- Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. This increased risk of severe infection is particularly so for pregnant women, children and young adults, and persons with medical conditions which increase their risk e.g. asthma, diabetes, immunosuppressive disorders, and morbid obesity, etc.

How can I prevent getting the virus?

Personal Protection Measures for persons to prevent infection with flu viruses include:

- Covering the nose & mouth when coughing or sneezing. Throw any used tissue into trash when done.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, avoid contact with others and stay home.
- A vaccine against H1N1 virus is currently in production and should be ready for the public in the fall.
- As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against seasonal influenza.

What should I do if I get sick?

- If you live in areas where people have been identified with H1N1 flu and you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should **stay home** and **avoid contact with other people**.
- CDC recommends that you **stay home until 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. Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means **avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings**.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1?

- Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) 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.
- During the current pandemic, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs during is to treat severe influenza illness (for example hospitalized patients) and people who are sick who have a condition that places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications.
- Stock-piling of these anti-viral drugs is not recommended.

What is it and should I attend a "swine flu party"?

- "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 acquiring natural immunity to 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.

Can I get infected with H1N1 from eating pork?

- No. H1N1 flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get infected with H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Cleaning Q&A Novel Influenza A H1N1

How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

- Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

What cleaners / agents kill the flu virus?

- Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics), and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time.
- For example, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used to clean hands. The gels should be rubbed into hands until they are dry.

What surfaces are more likely to be contaminated?

- Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.
- Surfaces commonly contaminated include bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters, table and desk top surfaces and toys for children

What household cleaning should be done to prevent the flu virus?

- To prevent the spread of influenza virus it is important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

Novel Influenza A H1N1 Vaccine

When is a vaccine going to be available?

- H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall (around mid-October). More specific dates cannot be provided at this time.

Will the seasonal flu shot also protect against the H1N1 flu?

- The seasonal flu shot is not expected to protect against the H1N1 flu. People will need to have both shots.

Can the seasonal and H1N1 vaccines be given at the same time?

- It is anticipated that they may be administered on the same day. However, we are expecting the seasonal vaccine to be available before the H1N1 vaccine.
- We encourage individuals to get the seasonal vaccine as soon as it is available.

Are there target groups that will receive the H1N1 shot first?

- First, everyone is eligible for the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, although some people may have health issues that would be affected by a vaccine and therefore should not take it. *The goal of the pandemic influenza vaccination program is to vaccinate all persons in the United States who choose to be vaccinated.*
- Because the vaccines may be released gradually beginning in October, a priority list was developed to focus on immediate immunization. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the CDC has recommended that certain groups receive the vaccine first -
 - Pregnant women
 - People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age (babies under 6 months of age may not be vaccinated themselves)
 - Healthcare and EMS personnel
 - Persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old
 - People ages 25-64 years that are considered high risk because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

Where will the vaccine be available?

It is the plan to make the vaccine available through:

- Clinics at the Macomb County Health Department
- Participating Doctor's offices
- Participating Pharmacies at the Flu Vaccine clinics
- School-based clinics (to be determined)
- Community-based clinics (to be determined)

What will the cost of the H1N1 vaccine and will insurance cover it?

- The vaccine will be provided "free of charge", although the vaccinators may charge an administration fee.

Is the vaccine mandatory?

- The CDC makes recommendations for who should receive the vaccine and the Health Department is implementing these recommendations by offering the vaccine.
- The vaccination is **voluntary** with a signed consent.

Other Questions

How many cases have been diagnosed?

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) updates their flu information weekly and can be found online through their website. www.michigan.gov

What should I do if my child is exposed?

- Monitor the child for flu symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose etc)
- If child develops symptoms, keep the child at home, that is, the child should not be sent to school or daycare.
- Get advice from your child's healthcare provider

What constitutes an epidemic?

An epidemic is a widespread increase in the number of an infectious disease cases, above normal expectation; often, many people are infected at the same time.

Who makes the decision to close a school or district?

The decision to dismiss students will be made at the community level. School officials are working closely with local and state public health and government officials to make sound decisions, based on local conditions. The decision considers

- the number and severity of cases in an outbreak (looking at national, regional, and local data),
- the risks of flu spread and benefits of dismissal,
- the problems that school dismissal can cause for families and communities, and
- different types of dismissal (selective, reactive, and preemptive).

When will the H1N1 vaccine be available and where can I get it?

The vaccine will be available through the Health Department in the fall (mid-October or later). Keep posted to the news for additional information.

Macomb County Health Department: www.macombcountymi.gov/publichealth

Michigan Department of Community Health: www.mdch.gov

CDC: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

"One-stop" access to US Government Information on Flu: www.flu.gov