

H1N1 (Swine Flu)

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 influenza, or swine flu, is a respiratory illness caused by type A influenza viruses. This virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because it was thought to be very similar to flu viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. H1N1 flu was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

H1N1 flu is contagious and is spreading between people. This virus may be transmitted in similar ways that other flu viruses spread, through coughing or sneezing. A person may be able to infect another person one day before symptoms develop and for seven or more days (longer for children) after becoming sick. It is possible that someone may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching his mouth or nose. Eating pork does not cause swine influenza.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Diarrhea and vomiting may also be associated with H1N1 flu. Most people with the virus have recovered without needing treatment, but hospitalizations and deaths have occurred.

What should I do if I think I have H1N1 flu?

If you have flu symptoms, stay home and avoid contact with other people to avoid spreading your illness. It is recommended that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, or if possible, until your cough is gone. If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider. He or she will determine whether testing or treatment is needed.

Seek emergency medical care for any of the following warning signs:

In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Severe or persistent vomiting

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

H1N1 Symptoms

- Headache
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Chills
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Body aches

How is H1N1 flu treated?

The CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (brand name Tamiflu) or zanamivir (brand name Relenza) to treat and/or prevent swine influenza. These antiviral medications may also prevent serious complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started within 2 days of symptoms.

What can I do to prevent H1N1 flu?

You can reduce your risk of contracting and spreading swine influenza and other influenza viruses by:



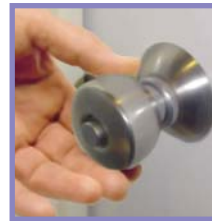
- Coughing or sneezing into your arm; avoiding close contact with people who have respiratory symptoms such as coughing or sneezing



- Not touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because this is how germs get into your body



- Staying home when you're sick and getting as much rest as possible



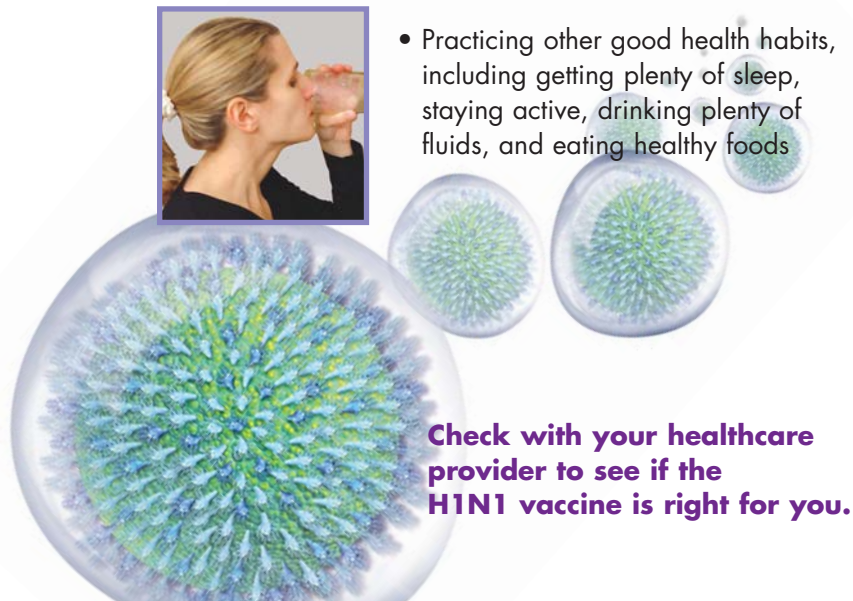
- Keeping surfaces and objects (especially tables, counters, door knobs, toys) that can be exposed to the virus clean



- Washing your hands often with soap and water for 15-20 seconds; using alcohol-based hand cleansers is also acceptable



- Practicing other good health habits, including getting plenty of sleep, staying active, drinking plenty of fluids, and eating healthy foods



Check with your healthcare provider to see if the H1N1 vaccine is right for you.

Lisa Morris Bonsall, MSN, RN, CRNP