

Questions & Answers about Novel H1N1 Flu Virus

Brought to you by Morton County Health Department

Some information in this document provided by CDC effective 08/11/09

What is Novel H1N1 Influenza A Virus (formerly known as swine flu)?

Novel H1N1 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. On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

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 this novel H1N1 virus contagious?

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

What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 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. Some people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How serious is illness associated with novel H1N1 flu virus?

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, hospitalization and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 Influenza A Virus?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with novel H1N1 flu viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) 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.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against this novel H1N1 virus. However, there are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. 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](#)

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Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Wash your hands **thoroughly** with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.
- 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. (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.

What should I do if I get sick?

Individuals who experience influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, should contact their physician, who will determine whether testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. 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.

Can I get novel H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?

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

Morton County Health Department encourages patients to use their judgment about whether they're sick enough to see a doctor, and to definitely do so if they've recently been to a high-risk area.

Additional information is available at:

Morton County Health Department Website: <http://www.mtcoks.com/health/health.html>

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

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