

# H1N1 Influenza

## **What is H1N1 influenza?**

H1N1 influenza (previously referred to as “swine flu”) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. In April 2009, hundreds of cases of human infection with H1N1 influenza were reported in several countries and US states.

## **How is H1N1 influenza spread?**

H1N1 influenza is spread like seasonal flu, when a person coughs or sneezes, sending contaminated respiratory droplets into the air where another person may inhale them. Sometimes people may become infected by touching a contaminated surface or object and then touching their own eyes, nose or mouth.

## **What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza?**

The symptoms of H1N1 influenza are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu, and may include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, runny or stuffy nose and tiredness. Some people also reported having nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with swine flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause underlying chronic medical conditions to worsen.

## **Who is at risk for getting H1N1 influenza?**

Cases of swine flu have most commonly occurred in people who have direct contact with infected swine. In 2009 the H1N1 influenza virus began to pass easily from person-to-person when an infected person had close contact with another person. A person who has H1N1 influenza may be able to infect other people one day before his/her symptoms develop to seven days after showing symptoms.

## **What is the best way to protect myself against H1N1 influenza?**

Health officials encourage community members to protect themselves by following common sense, proven disease prevention methods, including—

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water,
- Keeping a distance of at least six feet from people who are sick, and
- Avoiding touching your eyes, mouth or nose.

Individuals who are sick are encouraged to protect their family and their community by —

- Staying home while ill,
- Covering their cough or sneeze, and
- Avoiding sharing personal items such as utensils, drinks or a toothbrush with family members.

## **What should I do if I develop symptoms of H1N1 influenza?**

People who develop flu-like symptoms **AND** have a history of recent travel to a location where cases of H1N1 influenza have been confirmed, or have had close personal contact with someone who has a confirmed case of H1N1 influenza, should contact their health care provider.

## **How is H1N1 influenza treated?**

Two antiviral medications have proven to be effective against H1N1 influenza. However, antiviral medication may not be necessary for most people to recover from flu viruses. A decision can best be made by each person’s individual health care provider.