

The Facts about H1N1 flu (swine flu)

H1N1 influenza is a serious health concern, and having the right information is important. Even more, knowing the facts could help protect you and your family in the unlikely event that you're faced with this disease. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers the following information to help you understand the basics.

What is it?

H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease caused by a type of influenza A virus. It's more serious than the regular flu and can lead to complications such as pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death. Although H1N1 flu is common in pigs, humans have rarely contracted it. However, starting in late March 2009, several cases of human infections have been reported in the United States and throughout the world.

How is it spread?

The most recent strain can be transmitted from pig to human and from person to person. You can't get it from eating pork or pork products. It's spread the same way as the regular flu — through the coughing and sneezing of infected people.

What are the symptoms?

Signs and symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Headache and body aches
- Fatigue

Some people also experience vomiting, diarrhea and worsening of other health conditions.

How is it treated?

The CDC recommends several anti-viral prescription drugs. Taking zanamavir (Relenza[®]) or oseltamivir (Tamiflu[®]) may help treat the disease and prevent more serious complications. These medicines are effective if taken within two days of developing symptoms.

How can I prevent it?

The flu shot doesn't protect against H1N1 flu — and there are no other vaccines available right now. But, there are several things you can do to protect yourself.

- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill.
- If possible, don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Disinfect common surfaces such as desks and doorknobs.

What should I do if I become ill?

Stay home for at least seven days or 24 hours after symptoms have gone away, whichever is longer. Avoid contact with others during this time. If you have symptoms and live in an area where cases have been identified, call your health provider. Seek emergency evaluation if you or your child experiences any of the following:

In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or rapid breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Abdominal pain
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

In children:

- Unable to drink enough liquids to stay hydrated
- Fever with a rash
- Improved symptoms followed by return of fever and worsening of cough

If your child suffers from any of the following, call 911.

- Skin turning blue
- Inability to wake up
- Excessive irritability (e.g., your child doesn't want to be held)

Don't give aspirin or aspirin-containing products such as Pepto-Bismol® to anyone younger than age 19. They're linked to Reye's syndrome, a rare but sometimes fatal condition.

**Have more questions about swine flu or other health concerns?
Caring registered nurses are available 24/7.**

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