

How to Prepare for the 2009 H1N1 Flu

It is expected that this will be a severe flu season because seasonal flu and H1N1 flu will occur at the same time. Certain populations are more at risk for getting the 2009 H1N1 flu.

Who should get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine? Everyone who can be vaccinated should get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. However, initially the vaccine will be available in limited quantities. Certain groups of people should get vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 as soon as possible because they are at greater risk. These include:

- Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated.
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than six months of age because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated.
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel because they may have more exposure to people with the flu and they can be a potential source of infection for other patients.
- All people from six months through 24 years of age:
 - Children from 6 months through 18 years of age because many cases of H1N1 influenza have been seen in children and they are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings.
 - Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because many cases of H1N1 influenza have been seen in these healthy young adults, they often live, work and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population.
- Persons 25 through 64 years of age who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza including those with heart disease, diabetes and asthma.

How will I know if I have seasonal flu or H1N1? Because the symptoms are the same, you will not know which virus is causing your illness. If you received a seasonal flu vaccination and still get the flu, it is more likely that you have H1N1. Unless you develop severe symptoms, you do not need to seek medical care for the flu and do not need to be tested to determine what type of flu you have.

What should I do if I get the flu? Most people will recover without medical care. If you have the flu, you may be ill for a week or longer. You should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible to keep from spreading the flu. Avoid travel and do not go to work or school for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. (Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.)

However, if you develop severe flu symptoms or are at high risk for complications, seek medical care or contact your health care provider. Antiviral drugs are available for the treatment of H1N1 flu.

Flu Prevention and Control

Here are some practical tips for staying healthy that you should follow every day, and they are especially important during the flu season.

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away the tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm rather than into your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth – germs spread easily this way.
- Clean surfaces that are often touched such as door knobs and bathroom surfaces with regular cleaners or disinfectants.
- If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who appears to have the flu.

Contacts

By Internet:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
www.flu.gov or www.flu.gov/faq

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/flu

World Health Organization:
www.who.int

FMI:
www.fmi.org

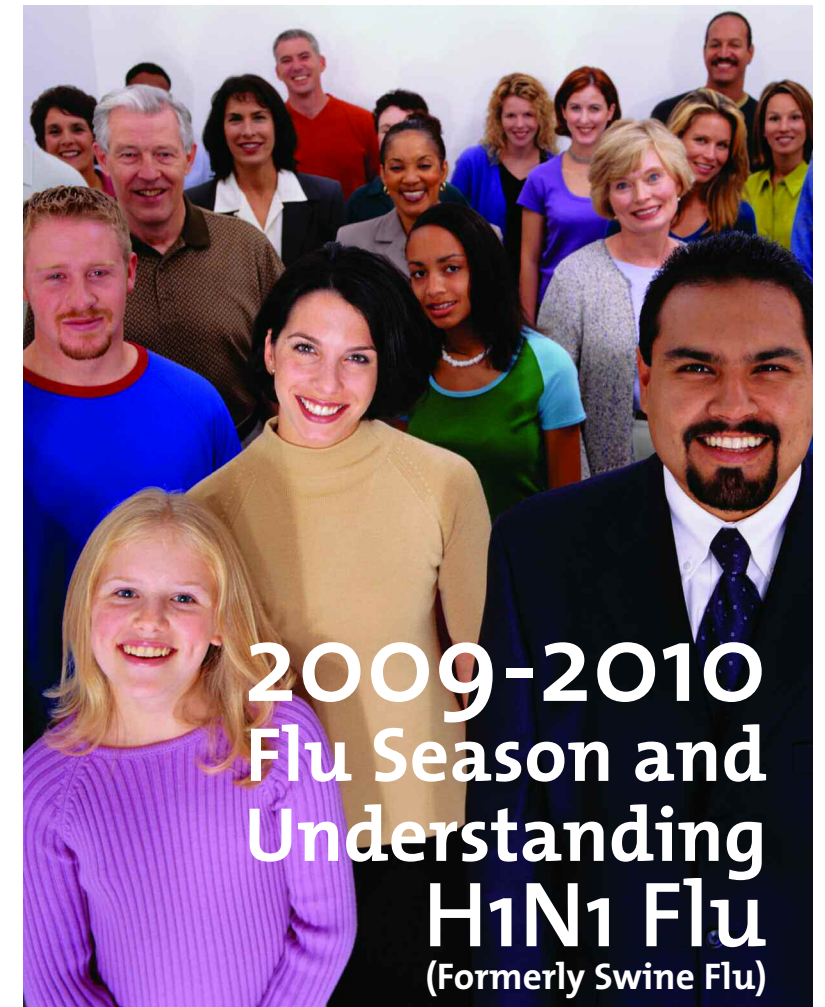
By Phone:

1-800-CDC-INFO • (1-800-232-4636) • (1-888-232-6348 for hearing-impaired)



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A Helpful Guide

The 2009-2010 flu season is here, and now is the time to be sure you do all that you can to protect yourself and those around you. You probably have also heard about the H1N1 flu (sometimes called swine flu) and still have questions about how this flu virus is different, how it affects you, and how you can keep healthy and protect your family. This brochure will help you understand the difference between seasonal flu and H1N1 flu and will provide you with suggestions on what steps to take now.

Seasonal Flu or Common Flu

Influenza, commonly called the flu, is caused by a virus. Every year there is a flu season, usually in the fall and winter months. In the United States, an average of 5 percent to 20 percent of the population gets the flu and 36,000 people die from flu-related causes every year.

What is the flu?

The flu is a contagious respiratory disease. Illness can be mild to severe. Symptoms are similar to those of the common cold and can include fever, runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, coughing, sore throat and muscle aches.

Who can get the flu?

Anyone can get the flu. It does not usually cause serious illness in healthy adults. For the very young, the elderly and those who have chronic conditions such as heart disease or asthma, the flu may cause complications and result in more serious illness. One of the most common complications is pneumonia.

How do people get the flu?

The flu virus is most commonly spread from person to person through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus particles can be inhaled through the nose or mouth. The virus particles may also be transmitted to a surface when a person coughs or sneezes. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their nose, mouth or eyes. The flu virus can only survive outside the body for about two to eight hours.

Are flu vaccinations effective? Can I get the flu from the vaccine?

Flu vaccinations are offered every year and are effective in preventing or reducing the severity and duration of the symptoms from seasonal flu. You cannot get the flu from the vaccine. The vaccine protects you from three common types of flu viruses (but NOT the H1N1 virus). It is generally recommended that people receive the annual flu vaccine. There is a small group of individuals who should not get vaccinated (for example, individuals allergic to eggs). Check first with your healthcare provider if you have questions.

Can people get the flu from food?

No. Influenza is a respiratory disease and is not foodborne. People cannot get the flu from eating or handling food.

What other precautions can prevent the flu?

Common sense precautions such as washing your hands with soap and water and sneezing into a tissue will help prevent the spread of the flu. And, stay at home if you have the flu to prevent spreading it to others. See the section on Flu Prevention for more details.

2009 H1N1 Flu (Formerly Called Swine Flu)

A new flu virus emerged in the spring 2009 that has never been seen in people before. Now known as 2009 H1N1 or novel H1N1, it is circulating around the world and will remain in the U.S. throughout the upcoming flu season.

What is 2009 H1N1 flu?

2009 H1N1 is a new influenza virus causing illness in people around the world. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009 and is expected to cause many illnesses this fall and winter. Because H1N1 is a new virus, the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect you from 2009 H1N1. In fact, a specific H1N1 flu vaccination is expected to be available in October 2009.

Why is 2009 H1N1 virus sometimes called “swine flu”?

Flu viruses can be found in people, pigs and birds. These viruses have the ability to change or mutate into new forms. The 2009 H1N1 virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs. But further study has shown that this is a new virus not previously found in humans or pigs.

How can you tell if you have H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are generally the same as the seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with the H1N1 virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Only a laboratory test can determine if your flu symptoms are caused by the H1N1 virus or one of the seasonal flu viruses.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

H1N1 flu spreads the same ways as seasonal flu. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

How long can flu viruses remain on objects (such as countertops and doorknobs)? Can they be removed?

Studies have shown that flu viruses can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for two-to-eight hours after being deposited on the surface. Regular household cleaning products and disinfectants, when used according to label instructions, are effective against flu viruses, including H1N1.

Can I get H1N1 flu from eating pork?

No. Like the common flu, H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease — not a foodborne illness. You cannot get H1N1 flu from eating or handling pork or pork products.

Can I get vaccinated to prevent 2009 H1N1 flu?

A new vaccine made specifically against the 2009 H1N1 flu virus is being developed and is expected to be available in October 2009. Once it is available, you should get vaccinated for the 2009 H1N1 flu. You should also get vaccinated for seasonal flu as soon as possible.

What Is Different About 2009 H1N1 Flu?

In many ways, the 2009 H1N1 flu is similar to seasonal flu, but there are some significant differences. Most important, remember that the everyday precautions you take to reduce the spread of seasonal flu will also help reduce the spread of 2009 H1N1 flu.

Why is H1N1 flu called a pandemic?

Pandemic influenza (pandemic flu) is a worldwide outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a new flu virus affecting large numbers of people and for which there is no natural immunity or vaccine. The 2009 H1N1 flu virus meets this definition and is therefore considered a pandemic. However, the virus has remained relatively mild and has not caused catastrophic disease or high numbers of deaths usually associated with pandemics.

How did the 2009 H1N1 virus emerge?

Flu viruses have the ability to change, and any flu virus can mutate into a new form. The 2009 H1N1 virus is a new virus never before seen in people. It has some unique qualities that make it different from other seasonal flu viruses. Scientists are closely monitoring the 2009 H1N1 virus to determine if it changes or mutates into yet another new form of virus. So far the virus has remained the same throughout 2009 even though it has spread around the world.

How is 2009 H1N1 flu different from seasonal flu?

The 2009 H1N1 flu has caused more illness in young people, especially those under age 25, than normally seen with seasonal flu. At this time, there are few cases and few deaths reported in people older than 64, which is unusual when compared with seasonal flu. Unlike seasonal flu, the 2009 H1N1 virus has been circulating in the population all year regardless of season. The vaccine for seasonal flu will not protect you from the 2009 H1N1 flu virus.

How are they the same?

The symptoms of seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu are generally the same, although the H1N1 virus has been found to cause more intestinal symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea. Both viruses are spread mainly by infected people coughing and sneezing. The everyday precautions to prevent the spread of seasonal flu also minimize the risk of spreading the 2009 H1N1 flu.

