



Novel H1N1 Flu Fact Sheet

What is novel H1N1?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new flu virus causing illness in people. This virus is contagious and spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular flu viruses spread. However, it is a different flu virus than the season flu virus.

How does novel H1N1 virus spread?

The spread of novel H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with flu. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death have occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How severe is illness associated with this 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, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

In seasonal flu, certain people are at “high risk” of serious complications. This includes people 65 years and older, children younger than five years old, pregnant women, and people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

One thing that appears to be different from seasonal flu is that adults older than 64 years do not yet appear to be at increased risk of novel H1N1-related complications thus far. CDC laboratory studies have shown that no children and very few adults younger than 60 years old have existing antibody to novel H1N1 flu virus; however, about one-third of adults older than 60 may have antibodies against this virus.

It is unknown how much, if any, protection may be afforded against novel H1N1 flu by any existing antibody. Therefore, it is necessary to get the immunization when it becomes available.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

What can I do to protect myself?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus. 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 flu. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like flu.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, CDC recommends that healthcare workers stay home for 7 days from symptom onset or until the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer. Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from infection others.

For more information on novel H1N1 flu:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/gov>.

or

<http://www.flu.gov>

CDC Public Information

Toll Free 24/7: 800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
