



New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services  
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## Influenza A (H1N1) Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the H1N1 flu?**

The H1N1 Flu (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs that is caused by a type A influenza virus. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. It is uncommon, however, for these viruses to infect humans and cause large outbreaks.

### **Are there human infections of the H1N1 flu virus in the United States?**

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with the H1N1 virus were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. All united states have reported cases of the H1N1 flu infection in humans and cases have been reported international also. An updated count of confirmed cases in the U.S. is available at [www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state and local health agencies are working together to investigate and monitor this situation.

### **Is the H1N1 flu virus very contagious?**

The CDC has determined that this virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

### **What are the signs and symptoms H1N1 flu in people?**

The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to those of regular seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with the H1N1 flu virus. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

### **How does someone get H1N1?**

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

### **When can someone with the H1N1 flu infect someone else?**

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 days or more after becoming sick. That means you may be able to pass the flu on to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

### **Is there medicine to treat the H1N1 flu?**

Yes. The CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for treatment of infection with these swine influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medications (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 will not make the flu go away, but they will make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

### **Is it safe to eat pork and pork products?**

Yes. The H1N1 flu virus is not spread by food, you cannot get it from eating pork or pork products. As always, eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

### **What precautions should people take to protect themselves from becoming sick?**

There are everyday actions people can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness like influenza including:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use your elbow, then throw the tissue in the trash after use
- Wash your hands often with soap and water (15-20 seconds with soap and warm water), especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

### **Who should be vaccinated?**

Based on CDC recommendations, the following populations have been targeted to receive vaccine before it is released to the general population.

- a. Pregnant Women
- b. Children and young adults 6 months through age 24
- c. Household contacts of children less than 6 months of age
- d. Health care workers and first responders with patient contact
- e. Adults 25 – 64 with medical conditions that are complicated by the influenza virus

Based upon the factors as outlined above, the following populations will be vaccinated by their private physicians with the first shipments of vaccine into the state of New Hampshire:

- a. Pregnant Women
- b. Children 6 months to 5 years with medical conditions
- c. Health care workers and first responders with direct patient contact

Followed as soon as possible by:

- d. Children 5 through 18 years of age with medical conditions
- e. Household contacts of children less than 6 months of age, especially siblings
- f. Young adults 19 through 24 years of age with medical conditions (Ethics Committee Minutes, 8/24/08)

The NH DHHS *Novel H1N1 Vaccination Distribution Plan* is available at [http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DHHS\\_SITE/default.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/default.htm).

### **What should people do if they get sick?**

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting and diarrhea, it is recommended that you stay home at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. You may want to contact your healthcare provider, particularly if you are worried about your symptoms. Your healthcare provider can determine whether influenza testing or treatment is needed.

Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick. 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.

### **What are the emergency warning signs to look for for severe illness?**

In **children** emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In **adults** the emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or sudden pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

### **How does someone know if they have the H1N1 Flu?**

Many people will never know because they won't become sick enough to seek medical attention, just as with seasonal flu. If you visit your healthcare provider, they may do a preliminary test to determine if you have is a flu strain. After that, samples are sent to the NH Public Health Lab for further testing to determine if the strain of flu virus is H1N1.

For specific concerns or questions about Influenza A H1N1 Virus, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-852-3345. You can also visit the NH Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov/swineflu/](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/), or the U.S. Health and Human Services website at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).