

**What is Novel H1N1 (Swine flu)?**

Novel H1N1 (Swine flu) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway. Further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a “quadruple reassortant” virus.

**Is novel H1N1 virus contagious?**

CDC has determined that novel H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

Human infections with the new H1N1 virus are ongoing in the United States. Spread of the virus is thought to occur the same way seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses can be spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Often time’s people may become infected by touching something- such as a surface or object-with flu viruses on it and then touch their mouth or nose.

**What Are the Symptoms of this virus in people?**

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu in humans are similar to those seen with regular seasonal influenza and include sore throat, fever, coughing, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills and fatigue. Some individuals with this flu have also reported nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Most individuals have recovered without medical treatment, however; severe illness and death has occurred.

**What is the Treatment for Swine Flu?**

Most people infected with Novel Influenza H1N1 do not require medical treatment There are antiviral medications available that can be used for the treatment of influenza but this treatment should be used only for serious influenza illness or in those at serious risk for complications from influenza. However, just as with treatment for regular seasonal influenza, the medications work best if started within the first 1-2 days of illness.

**How Can Novel H1N1 Flu Infection be Prevented?**

Vaccine is in production and should be available by Mid October 2009. The best way to prevent infection is by diligent hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 15 to 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, an alcohol based hand sanitizer may be used. Alcohol based hand sanitizers may be purchased at most retail stores. If using the alcohol based hand sanitizer, use enough to cover all surfaces of your hands and rub until the product is dry – do not wipe off the product with paper towels. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as viruses are readily spread in this manner. If you are coughing or sneezing, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue and then throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and then wash or sanitize your hands.

**What Should I Do if I Get Sick?**

If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. Remember to cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing. Then wash or sanitize your hands and do so every time you cough or sneeze. Seek immediate medical care if you are experiencing difficulty breathing, or are having severe or persistent vomiting that causes you to become dehydrated.

**How Long Can an Infected Person Spread H1N1 Flu to Others?**

Individuals with swine flu virus should be considered potentially infectious as long as they are symptomatic and possibly for up to 7 days following the onset of illness. Children, especially younger children, may be contagious for longer periods.

CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever has gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

**If I am admitted to the hospital will I be placed in isolation?**

As with regular seasonal influenza, patients who are admitted will require isolation. The health care staff will be wearing masks, eye protection and gloves and you will be asked to wear a mask if it becomes necessary for you to leave the room. If you have visitors, it will be necessary for them to wear a mask and use appropriate hand hygiene as recommended by the CDC.

