
FACT SHEET ON THE FLU

Information gleaned from www.flu.gov
and www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/

Seasonal Flu Basics

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It spreads from person-to-person and can cause mild to severe illness; and in some cases, can lead to death.

- In the United States, yearly outbreaks of seasonal flu usually happen during the fall through early spring.
- The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.
- Flu viruses can cause illness in people of any age group. Children are most likely to get sick because their immune systems aren't strong enough to fight off the infection.
- Some groups are more likely to have complications from the seasonal flu. These include:
 - ▶ those age 65 and older
 - ▶ children younger than 2 years old
 - ▶ people of any age who have chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, congestive heart failure, lung disease)



Complications from the flu can include:

- bacterial pneumonia
- ear or sinus infections
- dehydration
- worsening of chronic medical conditions

Every year in the United States, on average:
✓ 5 to 20 percent of the population get the flu
✓ More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu-related complications
✓ About 36,000 people die from flu-related causes

What is H1N1 (Swine) Flu?

- H1N1 (Swine) flu is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia, plus avian genes and human genes. Scientists call this a “quadruple reassortant” virus.
- H1N1 (Swine) flu is contagious. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. The virus is spreading from person-to-person, in the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.
- H1N1 (Swine) flu is NOT caused by eating pork or pork products. H1N1 flu is not a foodborne disease, it is a respiratory disease. The USDA continues to remind consumers that all meat and poultry products are safe to eat when properly prepared and cooked.
- Illness with the new H1N1 (Swine) flu virus has ranged from mild to severe. While the vast majority of people who have contracted H1N1 (Swine) flu have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths have occurred.
- About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with H1N1 (Swine) flu have had one or more medical conditions that placed them in the “high risk” category for serious seasonal flu-related complications. These include pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.
- Unlike the seasonal flu virus, adults older than 64 do not yet appear to be at increased risk of H1N1 (Swine) flu-related complications. CDC laboratory studies have shown that about one-third of adults older than 60 may have antibodies against this virus. It is unknown how much protection may be afforded against H1N1 (Swine) flu by an existing antibody.



Symptoms of H1N1 (Swine) Flu

The symptoms of H1N1 (Swine) flu are similar to seasonal flu, but may include additional symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea.

Seasonal Flu	H1N1 (Swine) Flu
All types of flu can cause: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fever ✓ Coughing and/or sore throat ✓ Runny or stuffy nose ✓ Headaches and/or body aches ✓ Chills ✓ Fatigue 	Similar to seasonal flu, but symptoms may be more severe. There may be additional symptoms. A significant number of H1N1 (Swine) flu cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Vomiting ✓ Diarrhea

Emergency Warning Signs

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

Emergency warning signs in children:	Emergency warning signs in adults:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fast breathing or trouble breathing ✓ Bluish or gray skin color ✓ Not drinking enough fluids ✓ Severe or persistent vomiting ✓ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath ✓ Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen ✓ Sudden dizziness ✓ Confusion ✓ Severe or persistent vomiting ✓ Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

PREVENTION & TREATMENT

Get Vaccinated. Vaccination is the best protection against contracting the flu. You need two vaccines to be fully protected this year. The seasonal flu vaccine is different from the H1N1 (Swine) flu vaccine. The CDC is encouraging people to get both vaccinations. Get the seasonal vaccination as soon as possible and get the H1N1 (Swine) flu vaccination as soon as it is available in early fall.

If you do contract the flu, talk to your doctor about antivirals. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that can be used for prevention or treatment of flu viruses. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. Two types of antivirals, Oseltamivir (TAMIFLU®) and Zanamivir (RELENZA®) may be effective against the H1N1 (Swine) 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.
- Stay home if you are sick for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.

CONTAMINATION & CLEANING

How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

What kills influenza virus?

Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics), and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time.

What if soap and water are not available and alcohol-based products are not allowed in my facility?

If soap and water are not available and alcohol-based products are not allowed, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How should waste disposal be handled to prevent the spread of influenza virus?

To prevent the spread of influenza virus, it is recommended that tissues and other disposable items used by an infected person be thrown in the trash. Additionally, persons should wash their hands with soap and water after touching used tissues and similar waste.

What household cleaning should be done to prevent the spread of influenza virus?

To prevent the spread of influenza virus it is important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

How should linens, eating utensils and dishes of persons infected with influenza virus be handled?

Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but importantly these items should not be shared without washing thoroughly first.

Linens (such as bed sheets and towels) should be washed by using household laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. Individuals should avoid 'hugging' laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating themselves. Individuals should wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub immediately after handling dirty laundry.