

# Understanding the Flu

## What is the flu?

Flu is a disease of the body's breathing system, including the nose, throat and lungs. Flu is short for "influenza." There are two types of flu, Type A and Type B. Each type has different strains.

## What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 flu is caused by a new strain of the Type A flu virus that was first recognized in April of 2009 and was called "swine flu." H1N1 flu is not the same as "seasonal" flu which occurs every year during the winter and early spring, but H1N1 flu causes symptoms that are similar to seasonal flu, is spread like seasonal flu, and can be prevented like seasonal flu.

## What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

H1N1 flu symptoms are very similar to seasonal flu symptoms. Most common are fever, cough, and sore throat. Symptoms can also include body aches, headache, chills, runny nose and feeling very tired. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. Symptoms last from a few days to up to a week or longer.

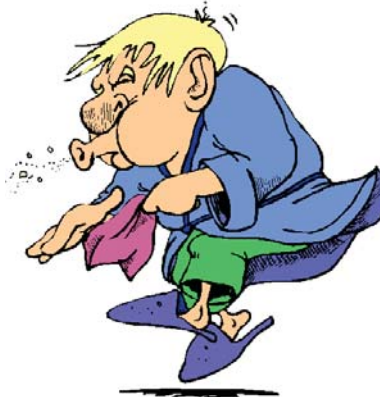
## Is H1N1 flu serious?

Like with seasonal flu, some people are at higher risk of serious health problems when they get the H1N1 flu. This includes pregnant women, infants, and people with medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, muscle or nerve conditions that affect their breathing and weakened immune systems.

## How does H1N1 flu spread?

The flu virus is in the wet spray (droplets of saliva and mucus) that comes out of the nose and mouth of someone who coughs or sneezes. If you are close enough to a person with the flu (3 - 6 feet) when they cough or sneeze, you can breathe in the virus and get sick. Flu symptoms start 1 - 4 days after a person breathes in the virus.

Flu is spread easily from person to person. The virus can also live for a short time on things like doorknobs, phones and toys. After you touch these objects, you can catch the virus when you touch your mouth, nose, or eyes. However, when the wet droplets on these types of objects dry



out, the virus cannot cause infection.

## How long is a person contagious?

Adults with the H1N1 flu can spread it from about one day before symptoms appear to about one week after. Children can spread the flu even longer after they get sick.

## How is H1N1 flu treated?

Because H1N1 is another strain of Type A flu, it is treated using the same type of drugs. Your doctor can determine if you need treatment. Tamiflu is commonly used to treat people who test positive for the flu.

People sick with any type of flu should make sure to drink plenty of fluids, get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods, wash their hands frequently and stay home to avoid spreading the flu to other people. Over the counter pain relievers may help people with the flu feel more comfortable. Children and teens with the flu should never take aspirin, because a rare but serious disease called Reye syndrome can occur.

## Is there a vaccine for H1N1 flu?

Yes. A vaccine helps your body to protect itself against a disease. A vaccine has been developed and should be available starting in the fall of 2009. Most people will need two shots of H1N1 vaccine, separated by about 3 weeks. The H1N1 vaccine is currently being tested to see if it will cause other types of illness or side effects.

## Should I get the seasonal flu shot?

Yes. The H1N1 vaccine will not protect you from getting seasonal flu. Whether or not you decide to get the H1N1 vaccine, you should still plan on getting your seasonal flu shot.

## Who should get H1N1 flu vaccine?

Five groups have been identified by the Centers for Disease Control to get this vaccine when it becomes available: pregnant women; people who live with or provide care for infants under 6 months of age (e.g., parents, siblings, and daycare providers); healthcare and emergency medical services personnel; people age 6 months to 24 years; and people age 25 to 64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications.

*Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons over 65 years of age is less than the risk for persons in younger age groups.*

## How do I know if I have H1N1 flu?

If you have symptoms of flu, it could be seasonal or H1N1 flu. If you think you have the flu, stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so you do not spread the virus.

## How do I protect myself from getting sick with H1N1 flu?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use alcohol based hand gel.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inside of your elbow if you don't have a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Always wash your hands before you touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Use a regular household cleaner to clean surfaces that might get flu virus on them like door knobs, phones, faucets and toys.
- Avoid close physical contact with people who are sick. People with young children, a weak immune system or a chronic medical condition should avoid large crowds, if possible.
- Stay home from work and school if you get sick with a flu-like illness until you have been free from fever for at least 24 hours after your last dose of fever-reducing medication (like Tylenol, Advil or Motrin). For most people this will mean staying at home for about four days.

Information provide by:

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