

August 2009

Novel H1N1 (Swine) Influenza Public Information Sheet



What is novel H1N1 (swine) influenza?

Novel H1N1 (swine) influenza is a new flu virus that developed from human, bird, and swine influenza viruses.

What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 (swine) flu in people?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 (swine) influenza in people are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever (greater than 100° F), cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Diarrhea and vomiting have also been associated with swine flu. Like seasonal flu, swine flu may cause a worsening of existing medical conditions, and thus pose a greater threat to those who are already chronically ill.

How does novel H1N1 (swine) flu spread?

The spread of swine flu occurs in the same way as that of seasonal flu. Flu viruses are transmitted mainly from person to person through the coughing or sneezing of people who are already infected with the influenza virus. A person may also become infected by touching a surface containing flu viruses and then touching his or her mouth or nose.

When is someone with novel H1N1 (swine) flu able to infect other people?

Most persons infected with swine flu may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and about 3 to 5 days after becoming sick.

Persons with swine flu should be considered potentially contagious as long as they have fever. Young children may potentially be contagious for longer periods of time. Healthy adults and older children can usually return to work or school 24 hours after fever goes away.

What should I do to keep from getting novel H1N1 (swine) flu?

Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, remain physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against swine flu.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective for this purpose.
- To the extent possible, avoid directly touching surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are spread in this way.
- Avoid close contact with those who are already sick.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you have become ill with influenza-like symptoms, contact your healthcare provider, especially if you have other medical problems. The provider should also be alerted prior to your visit so that proper precautions can be taken to safeguard medical staff and other patients. Children and adults experiencing emergency warning signs, such as difficulty breathing and shortness of breath, in conjunction with influenza-like symptoms, should seek emergency medical attention.

Limit your contact with other people as much as possible by remaining away from work or school until your fever is gone and you feel sufficiently well to return. Doing so may prevent those around you from getting sick.

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 (swine) flu?

Yes. Oseltamivir or Zanamivir are recommended for the treatment and/or prevention of infection in persons with underlying medical conditions. Antiviral drugs are not recommended for use in treating mild influenza-like illness in persons who are otherwise in good health. For questions concerning the use of antiviral drugs, talk to your doctor.

Where can I get more information about novel H1N1 (swine) flu?

West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources at <http://www.wvdep.org/Home/HotTopicSwineInfluenza/tabid/1856/Default.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/>

Travel Health Precaution at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/contentSwineFluTravel.aspx>