

KNOW THE FACTS!

H1N1 (SWINE) FLU

H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This virus is spreading from person-to-person, in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. This is a respiratory illness; swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food or eating pork products.

Public health agencies are closely monitoring the H1N1 flu situation. This is a rapidly evolving situation and guidance could change. Everyone is encouraged to visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ for detailed, up to date information.

WHY IS H1N1 VIRUS SOMETIMES CALLED “SWINE FLU”?

This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to flu viruses that normally occur in pigs in North America. Further studies have shown that this 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 avian genes and human genes.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF H1N1 FLU?

Symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu:

- Fever
- Cough
- Headache and body aches
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Sometimes also nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

People experiencing such symptoms should stay home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever and avoid contact with other people. You may want to contact your health care provider to determine if treatment is needed.

HOW SEVERE IS ILLNESS ASSOCIATED WITH H1N1 FLU?

Most people with H1N1 flu have had mild or moderate illness and have recovered without medical care, testing or treatment with antiviral drugs. People at greatest risk for H1N1 infection or serious complications include infants and children, young adults 19-24, pregnant women, and people 25-64 with chronic health conditions. People that get sick with flu-like symptoms **who are pregnant or who have a chronic health condition should call their health care provider promptly.**



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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HOW DOES H1N1 VIRUS SPREAD?

Spread of H1N1 virus is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

HOW LONG CAN AN INFECTED PERSON SPREAD THIS VIRUS TO OTHERS?

At the current time, CDC believes that this virus has the same properties in terms of spread as seasonal flu viruses. With seasonal flu, studies have shown that people may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms to up to 7 days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

CAN I GET INFECTED WITH H1N1 VIRUS FROM EATING OR PREPARING PORK?

No. H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get infected with H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

HOW CAN I PLAN AHEAD?

Utilize this time to prepare yourself and your family by creating a family emergency plan and stockpiling emergency supplies.

- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues and other related items could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.
- Make plans for emergency child care in case your child is ill and unable to attend school.

WHAT CAN A PERSON DO TO PREVENT THIS ILLNESS?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illness like H1N1 flu.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not near by, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If a tissue is not available, use the inside of your elbow to cover your cough or sneeze, **not your hands**.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Try to stay 6 feet away from people who are coughing or sneezing.
- If you are sick, you should stay home until you are free of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine for at least 24 hours.
- Receive the H1N1 flu vaccine, when available. People at high-risk for illness such as pregnant women and all children older than 6 months should get vaccinated.

IS THERE A VACCINE FOR H1N1 FLU?

Yes, there is a vaccine for H1N1 flu. Vaccines are the most powerful public health tool for control of flu, and the U.S. government is working closely with manufacturers to produce ample supplies of the H1N1 vaccine.

Hamilton County Public Health is working with schools, physicians and health centers to assure people have access to the vaccine.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF H1N1 VACCINE?

Vaccine is available in two forms – injectable and nasal spray. The injectable is a killed virus and is appropriate for most people to receive. The nasal spray (FluMist) is a live, but weakened virus vaccine and only available for healthy people 2 – 49 who are not pregnant.



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WHEN WILL THE H1N1 FLU VACCINE BE AVAILABLE?

Local health districts in Ohio have begun to receive limited quantities of H1N1 vaccine. Because initial doses of H1N1 vaccine are limited, the intended use is for targeted vaccination clinics for certain high risk priority groups. Additional vaccine shipments will arrive weekly. **Hamilton County Public Health does not currently have public H1N1 vaccination clinics.**

WILL THERE BE ENOUGH VACCINE?

Vaccine availability is likely to be limited at first, therefore people at the highest risk for illness will be first priority to receive the H1N1 vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified high-risk groups that are a priority to receive the H1N1 vaccination.

If H1N1 flu becomes more prevalent and there is enough H1N1 flu vaccine for everyone, local health departments may decide to open Points of Dispensing (PODs) in addition to encouraging individuals to get the vaccine through their normal flu shot provider. A POD is a recognizable location in the community where medications or vaccines can be distributed.

WHO SHOULD GET THE VACCINE?

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency services personnel who have direct patient contact
- Persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age
- People ages 25 through 64 years with chronic health disorders or weakened immune systems

IS THE VACCINE MANDATORY?

No, people may choose whether or not to receive the H1N1 vaccine. Immunizations are one of the most effective ways to prevent serious illness in children and adults. Pediatric immunization programs in the U.S. have been quite successful in reducing the number of children affected by highly contagious diseases, including measles and polio.

WILL THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE ALSO PROTECT AGAINST H1N1 FLU?

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the H1N1 flu. H1N1 vaccine will not protect against seasonal flu. The usual seasonal influenza viruses are still expected to cause illness this fall and winter. Individuals are encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available from their regular flu shot provider.

CAN SEASONAL FLU VACCINE AND THE H1N1 VACCINE BE GIVEN AT THE SAME TIME?

Preliminary clinical trial results indicate that flu shot versions of H1N1 flu and seasonal flu vaccines will be safe and effective if given at the same time. Nasal spray versions of seasonal or H1N1 flu vaccines must be separated by at least 28 days.

IF I HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER AT HOME WHO IS SICK WITH H1N1 FLU, SHOULD I GO TO WORK?

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. If they become ill, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive flu antiviral drugs to prevent illness.



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WHAT IF MY CHILD IS SICK AND I SUSPECT IT IS FROM H1N1 FLU?

If your child has been in contact with someone who has flu-like illness, you should:

- Monitor the child closely and take temperature twice daily.
- Those with symptoms and are otherwise healthy should stay home and should limit contact with others until fever-free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Anyone experiencing flu-like illness that has a weakened immune system or has a history of diabetes, heart disease, breathing problems or is pregnant is at higher risk and should contact their physician.

WHEN SHOULD I VISIT THE EMERGENCY ROOM?

If severe illness occurs, it is important to seek medical treatment immediately.

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

Parents should call their primary care provider (pediatrician or family physician) before going to the emergency department.

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

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

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO TREAT H1N1 INFECTION?

Most people recover fully without treatment. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, your healthcare provider may prescribe antiviral drugs to prevent serious flu complications. This fall, antivirals are prioritized for persons with severe illness or those at higher risk for flu complications.

WHAT IS THE BEST TECHNIQUE FOR WASHING MY HANDS TO AVOID GETTING H1N1 FLU?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

WHAT HOUSEHOLD CLEANING SHOULD BE DONE TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE H1N1 FLU?

To prevent the spread of H1N1 flu 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.



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