

H1N1 'Swine Flu': What You Need to Know

1. What is this new flu that's in the news? How dangerous is it?

The new flu, H1N1 flu or 'Swine Flu,' is a lot like regular (seasonal) flu. It is caused by a virus that infects your upper airways, causing fever and a cough that can last for a week or more. In New York City and the United States, the virus seems to cause mild illness. Just about all people get better on their own, without medicine.

2. How will I know if I have it?

H1N1 flu is a respiratory illness. Like regular flu, it usually causes a fever and a cough. It can also cause headaches, body aches, chills and tiredness. Some people who get the H1N1 flu may have diarrhea and vomiting.



3. How does the H1N1 flu spread?

Infected people can spread the virus when they cough or sneeze into the air. People can get infected by breathing in germs from the air, or by touching something with flu viruses on it, then touching their mouth or nose. You cannot get the H1N1 flu from eating pork.

4. Is there a vaccine for the H1N1 flu?

Not yet. Regular flu shots do not work against the H1N1 flu. Making a new vaccine will take 4 to 6 months, but scientists are working on it. In the meantime, there are things you can do to protect yourself against the H1N1 flu, regular flu, and many other respiratory illnesses.

5. How can I protect myself and others against the flu?

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Don't get too close to people who are sick. If you get sick yourself, avoid close contact with other people.



6. What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

If you have a fever with a cough or sore throat, stay home from work or school until you have been completely better for at least a day. If your cough lingers but you have no other symptoms, see a doctor. It may be alright to return to work or school if a week has passed since you first got sick. You don't need go to the hospital if your illness is mild. Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and wash your hands often.

7. When should I go to the hospital?

If your symptoms are bad and getting worse, you should visit a doctor or a hospital right away. If you aren't sure where to get care, call 311 for information. Care is always available if you need it, and no one will check your immigration status. Here are some signs that you may need medical treatment:

Adults

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe vomiting that won't stop

Children

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Fever with a rash
- Refusing to drink fluids
- Vomiting or diarrhea that won't stop
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being too irritable to be held
- Having flu symptoms return with fever and worse cough after starting to get better

8. Should I keep my children home to protect them?

No. There is no need to keep children home from school or other activities unless they are sick. Teach your children to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze and to wash their hands.



9. Hearing so much news about the flu makes me anxious! What can I do?

Some anxiety is normal. But if you feel overwhelmed, help is available. Talk to a doctor or a mental health professional, or call LifeNet, a confidential, 24-hour hotline.

- English LifeNet: 311 or 800-LifeNet (800-543-3638)
- Spanish LifeNet: 311 or 877-AYUDESE (877-298-33730)
- Asian LifeNet (Mandarin, Cantonese and Korean): 311 or 877-990-8585
- Deaf/Hearing Impaired (TTY): 212-982-5284 or www.mhaofnyc.org.

Getting information is healthy, but watching too much news can be upsetting, especially for children. If your child watches the news, you should watch too, and explain what it means.

10. What is the Health Department doing about the H1N1 flu?

The Health Department is carefully investigating the H1N1 flu. We are checking with hospitals, and testing people with severe illness and people who get sick in groups to see if they have H1N1 flu. So far, the H1N1 flu seems to be similar to regular flu. As we learn more about H1N1 flu we will share information with the public. For more information:

From the New York City Health Department

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cd/cd-swineflu.shtml>

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/general_info.htm