

H1N1 'Swine Flu': What You Need to Know

What is H1N1 influenza?

Like regular, seasonal flu, H1N1 influenza is caused by a virus that infects the nose, throat and lungs. It causes fever and a cough or sore throat that can last a week or more. It can also cause headaches, body aches, chills and tiredness. Some people also get diarrhea and vomiting.

How dangerous is it?

H1N1 has caused severe illness in some people, but the vast majority recover completely without any medical treatment.

How will I know if I have it?

Only a laboratory test can tell which type of flu a person has. H1N1 influenza has the same symptoms as regular, seasonal flu, and it responds to the same treatments. Knowing which type of flu you have will not change the way you take care of it. For that reason, the Health Department does not recommend laboratory testing for people with symptoms of influenza.

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 droplets released when the infected person coughs or sneezes, or by touching something with flu viruses on it, then touching their mouth or nose.



Will my seasonal flu vaccination protect me against H1N1 influenza?

No. Seasonal flu vaccine will not work against H1N1 flu. To protect against *both* kinds of flu, people will need 2 different vaccinations: one for seasonal flu, and one for H1N1. A new H1N1 vaccine has just been developed. People will probably need 2 doses of H1N1 vaccine, given 3 or more weeks apart. Call 311 or visit nyc.gov/flu for more information about vaccinations.

How can I protect myself and others against the flu?

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, using a sleeve or a tissue (not a bare hand).
- 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.



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 free of fever for at least a day. You don't need go to the hospital if your illness is mild.

When should I go to the hospital?

If your symptoms are bad and getting worse, or you have a medical condition such as heart disease, immune deficiency, diabetes, or severe asthma you should contact or visit a doctor or a hospital right away. If you aren't sure where to get care, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/flu 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

9. 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 wash their hands and to cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when they cough or sneeze.



10. 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.

11. Information may change – stay tuned!

For up-to-date information about seasonal flu, H1N1, and where to get a flu vaccine, including free or low-cost vaccines, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/flu.