

H1N1 (Swine) Flu

Frequently Asked Questions

General

✿ What is H1N1 (Swine) Flu?

H1N1 (Swine) Flu is a new influenza virus strain causing illness in people. First seen in Mexico, it was identified in the United States in April 2009. In just a few months, the virus spread throughout the world. This virus spreads from person-to-person the same way that regular seasonal flu viruses spread.

✿ How do you catch H1N1 (Swine) Flu?

You catch the H1N1 (Swine) Flu the same way you catch the seasonal flu. The influenza virus spreads mainly through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. You can become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

✿ What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 (Swine) Flu in people?

The symptoms of H1N1 (Swine) Flu in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. In some cases people have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Most people have mild illness, however more severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 (Swine) Flu. Like seasonal flu, people with underlying chronic medical conditions may have a greater risk of complications if they get infected.

✿ How serious is H1N1 (Swine) Flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 (Swine) Flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe.

✿ Are there medicines to treat H1N1 (Swine) Flu?

Yes. The antiviral medications Tamiflu and Relenza are sometimes used to treat influenza, including H1N1 (Swine) Flu, but most people don't need them. However, people with underlying medical conditions that put them at risk for influenza complications might benefit from antiviral medications. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. The antiviral drugs can make influenza milder and speed up recovery time. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

✿ Can people catch H1N1 (Swine) Flu from eating pork?

The H1N1 (Swine) Flu virus is not transmitted by food. You cannot get H1N1 (Swine) Flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products is safe.

☀ How long can an infected person spread H1N1 (Swine) Flu to others?

People infected with seasonal and H1N1 (Swine) flu shed the virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems.

☀ What is the difference between a vaccine and an antiviral?

Vaccines are usually given to prevent infections. Influenza vaccines are made from the killed influenza virus or weakened versions of the live virus that will not lead to disease. When vaccinated, the body's immune system makes antibodies that fight off infection if exposure to the virus occurs. Antiviral medications can be used to treat people who are infected by a virus. These medications also can be used to prevent infection when given before or shortly after exposure and before illness occurs.

☀ What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

Get vaccinated against H1N1 (Swine) Flu when vaccine is available. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health and your family.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth and nose. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others.

☀ How long can the influenza virus remain alive on objects such as books and doorknobs?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

For more information visit www.flu.maryland.gov or call 1-877-MDFLU4U



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