

Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu)

What is novel H1N1 influenza?

H1N1 influenza is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus identified in April of 2009. It was first called “swine flu” because the virus contained genes similar to those that cause diseases in pigs.

How severe is the H1N1 influenza?

Like seasonal influenza (beginning each fall), the virus affects each person differently. At this time, people who are at highest risk for complications from H1N1 influenza have been identified as:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 6 months of age
- All people 6 months through 24 years of age
- Persons age 25 through 64 who have chronic health conditions

Is the H1N1 virus contagious?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found this virus to be contagious. It is spread from person to person; probably in the same way the seasonal flu is spread – through coughing or sneezing. People might also be infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. The virus can live on surfaces such as desks and doorknobs, for 2 to 8 hours.

How long are people contagious?

People with H1N1 influenza can spread the virus from 1 day before they have symptoms up to 7 days after they get sick. Younger children may be contagious for longer periods.

What are symptoms of H1N1 influenza?

The symptoms are like those from seasonal influenza and include:

- Fever, chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny/stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea
- Nausea/vomiting

Is there a vaccine for the H1N1 virus?

Yes. This vaccine does not replace the seasonal flu vaccination.

What can I do to help prevent getting sick?

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash right after you use it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often, especially after you cough or sneeze and before you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Keep yourself healthy:
 - Get plenty of sleep
 - Exercise
 - Manage stress
 - Drink plenty of fluids
 - Eat a well balanced diet

If I get sick, will I need to be tested and treated right away?

Not everyone with the flu will need to be tested or treated with medications. In fact, most people can recover at home without needing medical attention. Some high-risk persons may need to see their health care provider or take antiviral medication, including:

- Children under 5 years of age
- Persons age 65 and older
- Pregnant women
- People with chronic medical conditions

Call your health care provider’s office if you have questions or are in a higher risk group.

If you do get sick, stay home from school or work until you have had no fever for 24 hours (without taking fever-reducing medications). Avoid close contact with others to prevent passing on the virus.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem. Aurora Health Care is a not-for-profit health care provider and a national leader in efforts to improve the quality of health care.