

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner. We recommend that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers are used, apply enough to cover hands, rub in and let dry. No water is needed; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

How serious is H1N1 virus infection?

The majority of cases have been mild or moderate. If you live in or have recently visited areas where H1N1 flu cases have been identified and become ill with flu-like symptoms, you may want to contact a health care provider who can determine whether testing or treatment is needed.

Can I get H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?

No. H1N1 flu is not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 flu from eating pork or handling pork products.

If you have other questions, please contact:

(For example, hospital charge nurse, infection preventionist, patient advocate, etc.)

what you should
know about

H1N1 Virus

Formerly Known as Swine Flu



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Why is 2009 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 influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what typically circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that typically circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a “quadruple reassortant” virus.

Is H1N1 virus contagious?

Yes. It has been found in almost every country during this world wide outbreak and is considered pandemic. Go to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov/swineflu/ or call 1-800-CDC-INFO for the most current information.

How does H1N1 virus spread?

Mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with containing flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 - 7 days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. So always cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough into your elbow or sleeve. Remember to clean your hands either with soap and water or alcohol gel if used to cover a sneeze or cough.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 virus in people?

Symptoms are similar to regular seasonal flu and include:

- Fever > 100 F
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: keep your hands clean, either by washing or gel. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with droplets from those coughing and sneezing. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

What else can I do to protect myself and others from getting sick?

Everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- 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, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 virus to others?

People with swine influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possibly for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children, especially younger children, may be contagious for longer periods.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

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

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