

**What is 2009 H1N1 Influenza?**

2009 H1N1 Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. People do not normally get H1N1 Influenza virus, but human infections can and do happen. Recently, cases of a new strain of the H1N1 Influenza virus have been confirmed and are easily transmitted person-to-person.

**How many 2009 H1N1 Influenza viruses are there?**

Like all influenza viruses, H1N1 Influenza viruses change constantly. Pigs can be infected by avian influenza and human influenza viruses as well as H1N1 influenza viruses. When influenza viruses from different species infect pigs, the viruses can reassort (i.e. swap genes) and new viruses that are a mix of swine, human and/or avian influenza viruses can emerge. Over the years, different variations of swine flu viruses have emerged. At this time, there are four main influenza type A virus subtypes that have been isolated in pigs: H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1. However, most of the recently isolated influenza viruses from pigs have been H1N1 viruses.

**Why is 2009 H1N1 Influenza 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 normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes.

**Is this the same as the bird flu that has been in the news in recent years?**

No. There are many different types of influenza viruses. The bird flu virus that has been watched closely is categorized as influenza A (H5N1), and is transmitted primarily among birds. This virus has not been found in the United States.

**Is this 2009 H1N1 virus contagious?**

Yes, the 2009 Influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

**What are the signs and symptoms of 2009 H1N1 Influenza virus in people?**

The symptoms of H1N1 Influenza in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever ( $\geq 100^{\circ}$  F or  $37.8^{\circ}$  C), cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with swine flu. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 Influenza may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

**How does 2009 H1N1 Influenza virus spread?**

H1N1 Influenza virus is spread from person to person by respiratory droplets expelled during talking, coughing, laughing or sneezing. Transmission may also occur by direct contact with contaminated objects and then touching one’s mouth or nose.

**How long can someone with the flu infect someone else?**

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more 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.

People with H1N1 Influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods. People with influenza-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine to prevent spread to other individuals.

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**What should I do to keep from getting the flu?**

First and most important: wash your hands. Work to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Avoid touching surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

**Will the seasonal flu shot I got this past fall or winter offer any protection against 2009 H1N1 Influenza?**

No. The new strain of influenza A (H1N1) virus is so different from the human influenza A (H1N1) virus strain that is contained in the 2008-09 influenza vaccine that persons who had this season's flu shot will not have immunity (protection) if exposed to the new H1N1 influenza A (H1N1) virus. The swine-origin influenza A H1N1 vaccine will be available for the 2009-2010 influenza season.

**Are there medicines to treat swine flu?**

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with H1N1 Influenza virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

**Should I ask my doctor for a prescription anti-flu drug?**

Antiviral drugs are usually used to treat people who are at risk for developing life-threatening complications from the flu. There is no reason to routinely ask for one of these drugs to keep at home, or to take them just as a precaution. Over-use could result in limited supplies for those who need it most. In addition, over-use of antiviral drugs has been known to lead to flu viruses becoming resistant to the drugs. All drugs, including antivirals, can cause side effects and should only be used when necessary under the direction of a health care provider.

**What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?**

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk or hand-rail and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

**How long can viruses live outside the body?**

Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

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

2009 H1N1 Influenza virus vaccine will be available in Fall 2009. 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:

- 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 when your hands are not visibly dirty. Children using these products should be supervised by adults.
- 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, public health officials recommend that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

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**What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?**

Good hygiene habits prevent and reduce the transmission of influenza and other respiratory viruses by:

- covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when sneezing or coughing
- disposing of tissues properly
- washing hands frequently
- using alcohol-based hand sanitizers if hands are not visibly soiled

When sick with a fever and cough:

- stay home from work, school, church, or other daily activities outside of the home
- avoid other crowded areas or events like shopping malls or sports arenas
- do not visit hospitals, nursing homes, or other long-term care facilities
- do not visit people at increased risk for severe flu-related complications

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

Washing your hands often is important to remove germs from your hands and stop the spread of disease. Your choices are soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand cleaner. When using soap and water, it is recommended to scrub your hands for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers if your hands are visibly clean. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. When using alcohol products, rub your hands until they are dry. The alcohol product doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

**What should I do if I experience flu-like symptoms?**

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

**Should I keep my child home from school as a precaution?**

No. Parents do not need to keep otherwise healthy children home from school unless directed to do so by local school and health officials. Children who are ill should not attend school. In this case, monitor your child for influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, and keep your child home if they are sick. You may want to contact their health care provider, particularly if symptoms are severe.

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**Can I get swine influenza from eating or preparing pork?**

No. H1N1 Influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 Influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

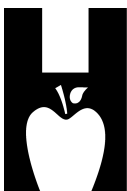
**Since feral swine or wild pigs can move between states, can persons get H1N1 Influenza virus from hunting feral swine or eating meat from wild hogs?**

The international outbreak of the new influenza H1N1 virus is occurring because of human-to-human spread of the virus. It is unknown how easily an infected person could pass the H1N1 influenza virus to a pig. Even if this is possible, the likelihood of a person catching the virus from a wild pig that naturally would not come into close contact with people is very, very small. Furthermore, H1N1 Influenza viruses are transmitted by respiratory droplets, not by food.

Other diseases like swine brucellosis and leptospirosis can pose a threat to persons who hunt or butcher feral swine. To protect against exposure to these diseases, hunters should take the following precautions:

- 1) Always wear plastic or rubber gloves when field-dressing, cleaning, and butchering a wild pig carcass.
- 2) Avoid direct skin contact with blood, urine, and reproductive organs.
- 3) Wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible after dressing the pig.
- 4) Dispose of gloves or soak thoroughly in a 10% bleach solution.
- 5) Cook wild pig meat thoroughly before eating.

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