

Answers to your questions about 2009 H1N1

A resource for families

What is 2009 H1N1?

2009 H1N1 is a new influenza virus also known as “swine flu.” It is a type of H1N1 influenza A virus (one of the common types of seasonal flu that has been around for years), but is unique in that it contains genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs from Europe and Asia, avian (bird) genes and human genes.

How is 2009 H1N1 different from seasonal flu?

2009 H1N1 appears to be spread in the same way as seasonal flu (by respiratory droplets), but may cause more severe illness in people younger than 25 years of age. Pregnant women (particularly those in the third trimester) and infants are at very high risk for flu-related complications. People age 65 and older appear much less likely to become ill with 2009 H1N1.

Is this flu virus contagious?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has determined that 2009 H1N1 is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the symptoms of this flu?

The symptoms of this illness, typical of seasonal flu, include:

- Fever, chills
- Sore throat, stuffy nose and cough
- Headache, body aches and fatigue
- Diarrhea and vomiting are common

Like seasonal flu, 2009 H1N1 may cause a worsening of chronic medical conditions and cases of secondary bacterial pneumonia.

How can I protect myself and others?

- Get vaccinated for seasonal flu.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- If you think you are ill with the flu, stay at home. Avoid close contact with others, as much as possible.
- Seek medical care if you are severely ill (such as having trouble breathing).
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or use your sleeve (if you do not have a tissue) and then throw the tissue in a trash can.
- After you cough or sneeze, wash your hands with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand gel or foam.

Is there a vaccine for 2009 H1N1? What about the seasonal flu?

A vaccine for seasonal flu is available. You can get the vaccine from your family doctor or go to one of the many flu clinics held in drug stores, grocery stores and other locations. The vaccine for 2009 H1N1 is expected to be distributed to health departments in mid-to late October. The CDC currently recommends that the 2009 H1N1 vaccine be made available first to people in five target risk groups (not in prioritized order):

- Pregnant women
- Persons who live with or provide care for infants less than six months old (eg., parents, siblings and daycare providers)
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- People ages 6 months to 24 years
- People ages 25-64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications



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