



What is 2009 H1N1 (swine flu)?

2009 H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new respiratory influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of 2009 H1N1 was underway.

What is the background of H1N1?

In spring of 2009, a novel influenza virus first caused illness in Mexico and then in the United States. It was not long after those initial reports that the “swine flu,” so named because it was related to a respiratory disease in pigs, was reported in Illinois and around the country. Later renamed H1N1, the virus was so prolific in its spread that by June the World Health Organization signaled a global pandemic was underway. At the time, more than 70 countries had reported cases. That total has now more than doubled.

Is 2009 H1N1 virus contagious?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has determined that the 2009 H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

Has H1N1 hit Illinois?

Yes, the first confirmed case of H1N1 in Illinois was reported in late April. Thousands of cases of H1N1 followed and, for a period of time, the state had reported the highest number of cases in the U.S. Unlike seasonal flu, which is usually active in the fall and winter, H1N1 has continued to circulate in the nation and in Illinois throughout the summer.

Is the H1N1 flu virus different than seasonal flu?

Yes, the H1N1 virus is very different than the flu virus that we commonly refer to as “the flu” (seasonal flu).

Why is H1N1 such a big deal?

Though seasonal flu can be a very serious health condition, it is normally not fatal in adolescents. According the CDC, The United States averages approximately 36,000 deaths each year from influenza-related complications, with over 90% of these deaths occurring in people older than 65 years of age.

The significance of the H1N1 virus is that it has the potential of fatally impacting young adults. The information analyzed by CDC supports the conclusion that 2009 H1N1 has caused greater disease burden in people younger than 25 years of age than older people. At this time, there are few cases and few deaths reported in people older than 64 years old, which is unusual when compared with seasonal flu. The White House supports this theory, and released the following statement regarding the seriousness of the H1N1 virus to adolescents:

“While it is not possible to accurately predict what may occur during the upcoming flu season, many scientists believe a second, more aggressive wave of H1N1 will strike the U.S.

this fall, possibly before an H1N1 flu vaccine is available. The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology recently said a plausible scenario is that an H1N1 epidemic this fall and winter could send 1.8 million Americans to the hospital and cause 30,000 to 90,000 deaths, many of these children and young adults."

How does 2009 H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Influenza viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something such as a surface or object with viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

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

People infected with seasonal and 2009 H1N1 shed virus and may be able to infect others from one day before getting sick to five to seven days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

Can I get infected with 2009 H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?

No. 2009 H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get infected with novel H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Is there a risk from drinking water?

Tap water that has been treated by conventional disinfection processes does not likely pose a risk for transmission of influenza viruses. Current drinking water treatment regulations provide a high degree of protection from viruses. No research has been completed on the susceptibility of 2009 H1N1 virus to conventional drinking water treatment processes. However, recent studies have demonstrated that free chlorine levels typically used in drinking water treatment are adequate to inactivate highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza. It is likely that other influenza viruses such as 2009 H1N1 would also be similarly inactivated by chlorination. To date, there have been no documented human cases of influenza caused by exposure to influenza-contaminated drinking water.

What can I do to best prevent H1N1?

According the CDC, it's as easy as 1-2-3!

- Get 1 seasonal flu shot
- Get 2 H1N1 flu shots
- Always use the "3 C's" – Clean, Cover, Contain.

Can anyone get a seasonal flu shot?

Yes, starting in early September seasonal flu shots will be available to anyone.

Can anyone get the 2009 H1N1 flu shot?

Starting sometime in mid-October, the H1N1 Vaccination will be available. It is anticipated that two shots, spaced about three weeks apart will be necessary to provide protection. Supplies will be limited initially and certain priority groups will be encouraged to get the shots first. Priority #1 will be pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, health care and emergency services personnel with direct patient contact, children 6 months through 4 years of age and children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions.

Once demand for vaccine for the prioritized groups has been met, vaccinations should begin for everyone from 25 through 64 years of age, and then for those 65 years of age and older. Current studies indicate the risks for infection among persons over 65 years of age is less than the risk for younger age groups.

For which specific “flu-like symptoms” should I be looking?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

In children, emergency symptoms/warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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

Are there ways for me to keep an eye on the human spread of 2009 H1N1 virus in the U.S.?

Yes, the CDC routinely works with states to collect, compile and analyze information about influenza, and has done the same for the new H1N1 virus since the beginning of the outbreak. This information is presented in a weekly report, which can be accessed at

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly>