

What is H1N1 Flu?

- **H1N1 flu is a influenza virus causing illness in people.** It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia, plus avian genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus. Read more about where this virus came from in this [Q&A on the origin of the H1N1 Flu](#).
- **H1N1 flu is contagious.** The virus spreads from person-to-person, in the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.
- **H1N1 flu is NOT caused by eating pork or pork products.** H1N1 flu is not a foodborne disease; it is a respiratory disease. The USDA reminds consumers that all meat and poultry products are safe to eat when properly prepared and cooked.
- **Illness with the H1N1 flu virus ranges from mild to severe.** While the vast majority of people who contracted H1N1 flu recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths have occurred.
- **About 70 percent of people who were hospitalized with H1N1 flu had one or more medical conditions that placed them in the "high risk" category** for serious seasonal flu-related complications. These include pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.
- **Seniors (adults 65 years and older) were prioritized for antiviral treatment to limit risk of complication if they got flu.** While your age means you have a lower risk of getting the flu, certain risk conditions (COPD, diabetes, etc.) mean if you get sick, you may have higher risk of complications from any influenza.

Symptoms of H1N1 Flu

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to seasonal flu, but may include additional symptoms such as **vomiting and diarrhea**.

Symptoms of Seasonal and H1N1 Flu:

Seasonal Flu

All types of flu can cause:

- Fever
- Coughing and/or sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headaches and/or body aches
 - Chills
 - Fatigue

H1N1 Flu

Similar to seasonal flu, but symptoms may be more severe. There may be additional symptoms. A significant number of H1N1 flu cases:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

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

Emergency warning signs in children:

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

Emergency warning signs in adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Guidelines for Taking Care of Yourself and Others

If you have been diagnosed with H1N1 flu, you should:

- **Stay home**, follow your doctor's orders, and watch for signs that you need immediate medical attention.
- Remain at home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.
- **Avoid close contact with others**, especially those who might easily get the flu, such as people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, young children, and infants.
- **Wear a facemask** (if available and tolerable) when sharing common spaces with other household members to help prevent spreading the virus to others. This is especially important if other household members are at high risk for complications from influenza.
- **Get plenty of rest.**
- **Drink clear fluids** such as water, broth, sports drinks, or electrolyte beverages made for infants to prevent becoming dehydrated.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.**
- **Clean hands with soap and water** or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into your hands.

If you are taking care of someone who has contracted H1N1 flu, you should:

- Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person. When holding a small child who is sick, place his/her chin on your shoulder so that he/she will not cough in your face.
- Make sure everyone in the household cleans their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Remind the patient to cover coughs, and clean his/her hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- Speak with the person's health care provider about any special care that might be needed, especially if the person is pregnant or has a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.
- Talk to your health care provider about taking [antiviral medication](#), such as oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®), to prevent getting the flu.
- Ask the patient's health care provider whether the patient should take [antiviral medications](#).
- Consider wearing a facemask or respirator, when close contact is unavoidable.
- Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a telephone hotline or health care provider if symptoms occur.
- Get medical care right away if the patient exhibits emergency warning signs