

# H1N1 flu



## A General Guide for the Public

Public Information Web Site: [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

### What is H1N1 flu?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu”) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This 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](http://www.who.int) (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

### What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. In the past, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

### How long can a sick person spread H1N1 flu to others?

In the current flu conditions, people with symptoms of flu should stay home for at least 24 hours *after* they no longer have fever or do not feel feverish, without using fever-reducing drugs. If the flu conditions become more severe, CDC recommends that a sick person stay home for 7 days. A person who is still sick after 7 days should stay home until 24 hours after the symptoms have gone away. In addition, this longer period should be used in health care settings and in any place where a high number of high-risk people may be exposed, such as childcare facilities for children less than 5 years of age.

### How does H1N1 flu spread?

Spread of H1N1 flu primarily occurs through contact with a person with H1N1 flu. Human-to-human spread of H1N1 flu occurs in the same way as seasonal flu, through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

### How can you protect yourself & your family from H1N1 flu?

All Americans share in the responsibility to plan for this fall’s flu season. Given the unique combination of regular seasonal flu, as well as the H1N1 virus, it’s important for everyone to take action to reduce the spread of the flu. American families and businesses should prepare their own household and business plans and think through the steps they will need to take if a family member or a co-worker contracts the flu.

Here are some everyday actions that you and your family can take to stay healthy.

- **Stay home if you get sick.** CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- **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 that way.

Follow the advice of your local public health department regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other measures to reduce flu transmission. These measures will continue to be important after a novel H1N1 vaccine is available because they can prevent the spread of other viruses that cause respiratory infections.