

Flu Season and 2009 H1N1

What is 2009 H1N1 (swine flu)?

2009 H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new 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.

How does 2009 H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu 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 flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus?

The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1 and have respiratory symptoms without a fever. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How severe is illness associated with 2009 H1N1 flu virus?

Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this 2009 H1N1 virus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at “high risk” of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease. One thing that appears to be different from seasonal influenza is that adults older than 64 years do not yet appear to be at increased risk of 2009 H1N1-related complications thus far.

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

People infected with seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 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.

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. If you don't have a tissue cough or sneeze into your elbow .
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, [CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

Are there medicines to treat 2009 H1N1 infection?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with 2009 H1N1 flu virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) 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 those at higher risk for complications. (Source: Center for Disease Control)

Recommendation for Use of H1N1 Vaccine

The committee recommended the vaccination efforts focus on five key populations. Vaccination efforts are designed to help reduce the impact and spread of novel H1N1. The key populations include those who are at higher risk of disease or complications, those who are likely to come in contact with novel H1N1, and those who could infect young infants. When vaccine is first available, the committee recommended that programs and providers try to vaccinate:

- pregnant women,
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age,
- health care and emergency medical services personnel,
- persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age, and people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

The committee recognized the need to assess supply and demand issues at the local level. The committee further recommended that once the demand for vaccine for these prioritized groups has been met at the local level, programs and providers should begin vaccinating everyone from ages 25 through 64 years. Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. Therefore, as vaccine supply and demand for vaccine among younger age groups is being met, programs and providers should offer vaccination to people over the age of 65.

The committee also stressed that people over the age of 65 receive the seasonal vaccine as soon as it is available. Even if novel H1N1 vaccine is initially only available in limited quantities, supply and availability will continue, so the committee stressed that programs and providers continue to vaccinate unimmunized patients and not keep vaccine in reserve for later administration of the second dose.

The novel H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine. It is intended to be used alongside seasonal flu vaccine to protect people. Seasonal flu and novel H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day.

(Source: CDC)

HealthFirst Medical's Urgent Care Services

HealthFirst Medical Group started offering Urgent Care Services in February of 2009. We are now Urgent Care providers for Cigna Insurance and United Healthcare/Pacificare. We also see cash patients for an initial visit as low as \$40.

Urgent Care is same day, immediate care for non life-threatening conditions. Some of the more common conditions for which we treat patients are as follows: coughs, colds, flu, headache pain, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections, ear infections, asthma, sprains, strains, back pain, lacerations, burns, closed fractures, foreign body in eyes, contusions, abrasions, and rashes.

If your company does not offer health insurance to your employees HealthFirst is an option for these employees to get low cost care close to where they work. Our marketing department can supply you with flyers of our Urgent Care Services to distribute them to your employees. If you would like flyer, please call our marketing department at 562-926-3440 x313.

Staying Fit in 2009

Fitness is for everyone, and best of all, it includes every kind of exercise. As long as you do it regularly, any physical activity can help you look and feel your best, and make you stronger and healthier.

- **You don't have to sweat it—try "exercise lite."** Research shows that getting at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week can make a significant difference in your health. You can get the same benefits by working a little harder for a shorter time.
- **Find the right fit.** The key to getting regular exercise is to choose activities that you enjoy and feel comfortable doing.
- **Three's company.** Aerobic exercise, strength training, and flexibility are key components of total fitness.
- **Mix it up.** Are you already active and looking for a new routine? Or maybe you want to optimize your health and fitness level? Consider cross-training to help you reach your goal.

(Source: kp.org)