



Alameda County Public Health Department

H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu)

Question and Answer

| H1N1 Flu Basics | |
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| 1. What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)? | H1N1 (also referred to as “swine flu” or “swine influenza A”) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in April 2009 in the United States. The virus is spreading person-to-person, probably in the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. |
| 2. Why was H1N1 flu originally called “swine flu”? | This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu,” because many of the genes in this virus are similar to an influenza virus that normally affects North American pigs. However, laboratory testing has found that H1N1 is very different from influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs in North America. |
| 3. Where have people in the U.S. been infected with H1N1 flu? | Cases of H1N1 flu were first confirmed in Southern California and near Guadalupe County, Texas. For the latest information on the number of confirmed cases in the U.S., visit: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ . For the latest information on the number of international cases by country, visit: http://www.who.int/en/ . |
| 4. Have there been any confirmed cases of H1N1 flu in Alameda County? | As of May 11, 2009, there were 4 confirmed and 4 probable cases in Alameda County. These numbers continue to change daily. |
| 5. How serious have the U.S. cases been? | Most cases of swine flu in the U.S. to date have been mild and resemble regular seasonal flu. |

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| 6. What are the signs of H1N1 flu in people? | The signs of H1N1 flu in people are like the signs of seasonal human flu. These signs include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. Some people report that they have diarrhea and vomiting. In the past, severe illness and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause chronic medical conditions to get worse. |
| 7. How is H1N1 flu diagnosed? | To diagnose H1N1 flu, a respiratory sample would need to be taken within the first four to five days of illness. In California, suspected cases of H1N1 flu are sent to the state public health laboratory for confirmation. |
| 8. Is there treatment for Swine Flu in humans? | At this time, CDC advises the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with Swine Flu viruses. If your health care provider confirms that you have Swine Flu, they will advise treatment for you. |
| 9. How serious is this situation? | Influenza is always serious – each year, in the United States, seasonal influenza results, on average, in an estimated 36,000 dying from flu-related causes. The new H1N1 virus poses the potential to be at least as serious as seasonal flu if not more so. Because this is a new virus, most people will not have immunity to it and so illness may be more severe and widespread as a result. |
| The Spread of H1N1 Flu | |
| 10. How does H1N1 flu spread? | H1N1 flu is thought to spread in the same way that the seasonal flu spreads. When infected people cough or sneeze, flu germs are spread through the air from person to person. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu germs on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. At this time it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people. |
| 11. If I have H1N1 flu, when can I pass it to someone else? | Infected people may be able to infect others one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after getting sick. This means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick and while you are sick. Children, especially younger children, may be able to spread the germs longer. |

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| 12. How long can viruses live outside the body? | We know that some viruses, bacteria, and germs can live 2-8 hours on objects like tables, doorknobs, and desks. Washing hands often will help you lower the chance of getting infected from touching these common objects. |
| 13. Can H1N1 flu be passed through water? | Tap water or recreational water treated by conventional disinfection processes does not likely pose a risk for transmission of influenza viruses. |
| 14. Do pigs carry this virus and can I catch this virus from a pig? | At this time, there is no evidence that swine in the United States are infected with this new virus. However, there are flu viruses that commonly cause outbreaks of illness in pigs. Most of the time, these viruses do not infect people, but influenza viruses can spread back and forth between pigs and people. |
| 15. Can I get H1N1 flu from eating or cooking pork? | No. You cannot get H1N1 flu from eating or cooking with pork products. |
| How to Prevent H1N1 Flu | |
| 16. What can I do to protect myself from getting sick? | <p>Take these steps to prevent the spread of germs and to protect your health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also work. • Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way. • Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash or flush it down the toilet after you use it. • Try to avoid close contact with sick people. • If you get sick with the flu, CDC advises that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others for 7 days or until you feel better (whichever is longer). • Click here for more information on what you can do to protect yourself from getting infected: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm?s_cid=Swine_Flu_outbreak_internal_003 |

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| <p>17. Are there recommendations against travel?</p> | <p>At this time, CDC advises that U.S. travelers avoid all unnecessary travel to Mexico. CDC is concerned that repeated travel to Mexico presents a major risk for more outbreaks of H1N1 Flu in the United States. Changes to this advice will be posted at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/. Please check this site often for updates.</p> <p><i>If you must travel to an area that has reported cases of H1N1 Flu, check for updates from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (http://www.cdc.gov/) • Secretaria de Salud (http://www.salud.gob.mx/) • World Health Organization (http://www.who.int/en/) • Monitor announcements from Mexico’s Ministry of Health and local government including information about affected areas, as not all areas are equally affected. • Follow local public health guidelines, including any movement restrictions and prevention recommendations. (www.acphd.org) • Be aware that Mexico is checking all exiting airline passengers for signs of H1N1 flu. Exit screening may cause significant delays at airports. |
| <p>If You Get Sick</p> | |
| <p>18. What should I do if I get sick?</p> | <p>If you live in areas where people have been identified with new H1N1 flu and become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people, except to seek medical care.</p> <p>If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed</p> |
| <p>19. When to seek emergency care:</p> | <p>If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.</p> <p>In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast breathing or trouble breathing • Bluish skin color • Not keeping fluids down • 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 • Fever with a rash <p>In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention</p> |

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| | <p>include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath• Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen• Sudden dizziness• Confusion• Severe or persistent vomiting |
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