

Pandemic H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

What is Pandemic H1N1 flu (formerly known as swine flu)?

Pandemic H1N1 flu is a respiratory infection caused by a new flu virus responsible for large outbreaks in many parts of the world. It has led to many hospitalizations and some deaths in certain parts of the U.S. population.

Is Pandemic H1N1 flu the same as the seasonal flu?

No. The virus that causes Pandemic H1N1 flu is a new type of flu virus that is different from the virus that causes the seasonal flu. Both types of the flu can be serious. The good news is that getting a vaccine and practicing simple prevention steps such as washing your hands often can prevent them both.

How is Pandemic H1N1 flu spread?

The main way that influenza viruses spread is through droplets from a sick person when they cough or sneeze. Flu viruses can also live on surfaces such as tables, faucets or doorknobs for up to eight hours. You can become infected with Pandemic H1N1 flu by touching an infected surface, then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

How serious is Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Most people will recover from the Pandemic H1N1 flu without treatment. However, just like the seasonal flu, Pandemic H1N1 flu can lead to serious health problems. Pregnant women; adults younger than 25 years of age; young children; and people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and kidney disease, are more likely to have complications from the flu.

What are the symptoms of Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Many of the symptoms of Pandemic H1N1 flu are the same as the symptoms of the seasonal flu. These include fever, dry cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and tiredness. The Pandemic H1N1 flu may also cause diarrhea and vomiting and can lead to serious complications for some people.

How is Pandemic H1N1 flu treated?

Pandemic H1N1 flu is treated the same way that seasonal flu is – with lots of fluids and plenty of rest away from work or school. You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), or naproxen (Aleve®) – NOT aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) for fever and body aches. For more serious cases, a healthcare provider may prescribe an antiviral medication. Antiviral medication can make your illness milder, make symptoms last a shorter period of time, and prevent more serious flu complications.

If you get sick, should you get tested for Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Your healthcare provider will decide whether flu testing is needed. Most individuals with healthy immune systems do not need to be tested for Pandemic H1N1 because they will likely recover on their own. However, patients who are hospitalized, or people that have special medical conditions that weaken their immune system such as pregnant women, people with diabetes, infants, and people over 60 years of age should get tested to be certain they'll get the treatment that is best for them.

[> more](#)

Should you get vaccinated against Pandemic H1N1 flu?

The vaccine for Pandemic H1N1 flu is different from the seasonal flu vaccine that is recommended each year. Just like seasonal flu vaccines, Pandemic H1N1 vaccines are expected to be safe, effective and the best way to prevent the flu.

The Pandemic H1N1 vaccine will be first available to:

- Pregnant women
- People living with or caring for infants under 6 months of age
- Emergency medical services personnel and health care workers
- Children and young adults from 6 months through 24 years
- People aged 25 through 64 years with chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease, asthma, diabetes, or weakened immune systems

If the Pandemic H1N1 vaccine is recommended for you, check with your healthcare provider to schedule an appointment. Don't forget to ask your provider if you should also receive a seasonal flu vaccine and pneumococcal vaccine, which can prevent common flu complications. If you don't have a healthcare provider, you may be able to receive low-cost or no-cost immunizations. Please visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov> or dial the Los Angeles County Info Line at 2-1-1 for more information.

Are Pandemic H1N1 flu vaccines mandatory?

You aren't required to get Pandemic H1N1 flu vaccines, but getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent this flu.

Why aren't Pandemic H1N1 flu vaccines recommended for older adults?

The groups recommended for vaccination are picked because they are more likely to get this flu, spread this flu, or suffer from more serious health problems if they are infected. Unlike seasonal flu, Pandemic H1N1 flu has caused fewer complications for older adults. This may be because older adults were exposed to the viruses in past years and have some immunity (ability to recognize and fight off the virus). Therefore, with limited vaccine available, efforts will focus on those most likely to have serious health problems.

What else can you do to protect yourself and your family from Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Following some simple, everyday tips can help protect you and your family from the flu.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water and/or use gel sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth since germs spread that way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people and if you're sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever ends.

For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
(800) CDC-INFO or (800) 232-4636
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

California Department of Public Health
(888) 865-0564
www.cdph.ca.gov

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Health Care Services: Dial 2-1-1
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/H1N1>
DPH Update listserv:
E-mail Listserv@listserv.ph.lacounty.gov
Include "subscribe DPHUPDATE first name last name" in the subject line and body

9/23/09

