

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu): A Guide for Individuals and Families Prevention and Preparation

What is H1N1 Flu and how does it spread?

H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus. It spreads easily among humans, especially the young. No one, except those who have been infected, is immune.

Flu viruses spread through the droplets that come from your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze. These tiny particles can be inhaled or transferred to others from surfaces such as TV remotes, doorknobs, telephones, toys and countertops.

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu symptoms can vary from mild to severe. Public health experts are concerned that the H1N1 virus may change (mutate) and become more severe over time.

Some individuals, including pregnant women and those with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease, may be at greater risk for developing a severe illness from H1N1 flu. Pregnant women and those with chronic medical conditions should contact their health care provider immediately when they have flu-like symptoms.

H1N1 flu virus infection can cause a wide range of symptoms including:

- Fever greater than 100° F
- Cough, sore throat, runny nose
- Aches, chills, fatigue
- In some cases, diarrhea and vomiting

Health Habits and Flu Prevention

Preventing the spread of germs is the most effective way to combat the virus. This means protecting your own health and the health of your family members through proper hand washing, cough etiquette, social distancing and staying home when sick.

- Clean your hands frequently with soap and running water. Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer when soap and running water are not available. Remember to clean hands **before** preparing or serving food, inserting or removing contact lens or treating wounds and cuts. Clean hands **after** coughing or sneezing, using the bathroom, caring for a sick person or after contact with a potentially sick person.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Cough or sneeze into your sleeve if a tissue isn't handy. Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Teach your children how to wash their hands and monitor their hand washing. Help them learn to "catch" coughs and sneezes in a tissue or to do the "Dracula catch" when tissues aren't available.
- Frequently clean commonly used surfaces, such as the TV remote, doorknobs, telephone, and kitchen and bathroom counters.
- Avoid crowds and large gatherings.
- Stay home if you are sick and don't send sick children to school or child care. Individuals should remain at home until they have remained fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medications, for at least 24 hours.
- To minimize the spread of infection among household members keep sick members away from others and designate one person to care for those who are sick.



Preparation

Learn as much as you can about H1N1 flu and know where to go for the most current information. Sources of accurate information include:

- Your local county health department
- The Kansas Department of Health and Environment at <http://www.kdheks.gov>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

Plan to care for yourself and your family members at home. A useful planning tool for individuals and families is available at <http://flu.gov/plan/individual/checklist.html> . Discuss your plans with all members of your household.

Make a list of emergency health care contacts and keep it in a handy location.

Have a list of basic health information for each family member including:

- Name, date of birth
- Allergies
- Chronic medical conditions
- Other special health care needs

Keep a two-week supply of non-perishable food and beverages on hand.

- Canned goods, dry cereals and crackers
- Bottled water, fruit juices
- Baby food and formula

Stock up on health and household supplies.

- Prescription medications and over-the-counter drugs
- Necessary medical supplies for chronic health conditions like diabetes
- Medicines for fever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Fever thermometer
- Fluids to reduce the risk of dehydration, for example sports drinks for adults and teens and Pedialyte ® or other generic electrolyte solution for children.
- Cleaning supplies, tissues, toilet paper and disposable diapers
- Cell phone and charger

Warning! Do **not** give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reyes Syndrome.

Have a plan for possible disruptions in work, school or child care schedules:

- Stay home if you are sick.
- Have a back up plan in place in case your child is sick. Children with flu-like symptoms should not attend school or child care or other group setting.

Establish a network of “flu friends” who can help if you are sick.



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