



Overview of H1N1 Swine Flu

H1N1 FAQ's • September 2009

General Information

What is H1N1 Swine Flu?

H1N1 "swine flu" is a new influenza virus causing illness in people and was first detected in people in April 2009 in the United States during April 2009. Florida's first case of H1N1 swine flu virus was diagnosed on May 1, 2009. Visit www.myflusafety.com regularly for the most up-to-date information about H1N1 Swine Flu in Florida.

What is the current status in Florida?

The H1N1 swine flu virus is causing illness in infected persons in the United States and countries around the world, including Florida. CDC expects that illnesses may continue for some time. As a result, you or people around you may become ill. If so, you need to recognize the symptoms and know what to do.

Have any Floridians died from H1N1?

Yes, as of September 9, 2009, there have been 77 laboratory confirmed H1N1 Swine Flu deaths in Florida.

Why is the virus sometimes called swine flu?

H1N1 swine flu was initially referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs in North America. Further study has shown this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It also has avian (bird) genes and human genes.

What is the difference between seasonal flu and H1N1 swine flu? People do not have immunity to this virus unless they have gotten sick with H1N1 swine and have recovered. A vaccine is being produced, and this will provide some protection to people who get the H1N1 Swine Flu shot.

Symptoms & Spread

Is H1N1 swine flu virus contagious?

H1N1 swine flu is contagious and can spread from person to person. The virus spreads in the same way regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. Most people who have become ill with this new virus have recovered without requiring medical treatment.

How is this virus spread?

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 eyes, mouth or nose.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of seasonal flu and H1N1 Swine flu are similar and include sudden onset of fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting with this virus. Flu may worsen underlying chronic medical conditions.

Prevent the Spread

Those who are sick should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading the illness to others. If you or anyone in your family has become ill with flu-like symptoms, you should call your health care provider about your symptoms before going to the office or clinic to avoid needlessly exposing others in the waiting room. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

Everyone can take these steps to protect their health:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket, and wash your hands with soap and water.
- If you do not have a tissue, don't cough or sneeze into your hand. Instead, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Try to stay in good general health by getting plenty of sleep, drinking plenty of fluids, and eating nutritious food.
- Get vaccinated when vaccine is available to you.

What is the best technique for washing my hands?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. It is recommended that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds (singing Happy Birthday to yourself twice is about 15-20 seconds). When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands

Illness

How long does the illness last?

The flu usually lasts three to seven days, although cough and malaise can persist for more than two weeks. Human influenza virus infections can cause primary influenza viral pneumonia; worsen underlying medical conditions, such as pulmonary or cardiac disease; lead to secondary bacterial pneumonia or sinusitis; or cause co-infections with other viral or bacterial pathogens.

How severe is illness associated with H1N1 swine flu virus?

Illness with the new H1N1 swine flu 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. One thing that appears to be different from seasonal influenza is that adults age 65 and older do not yet appear to be at increased risk of the H1N1 swine flu related complications.

How long are people infectious to others?

People infected with seasonal and H1N1 swine flu shed the virus and may be able to infect others up to 1 day before getting sick and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming ill. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 swine flu virus. People are most infectious when they have a fever. In most situations, people can safely return to work or school if they have been free of fever without taking anti-fever medicines for 24 hours or more.

Emergency Warning Signs: If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include: Fast breathing or trouble breathing; bluish or gray skin color; not drinking enough fluids ; severe or persistent vomiting; 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

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath; pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting; flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

Is anyone immune to the H1N1 swine flu virus?

Older individuals, age 65 and older have been reported to have lower rates of H1N1 swine infection when compared to other age groups. Why this is the case is not fully understood.

What is the incubation period?

According to information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the estimated incubation period for H1N1 swine Flu is currently unknown, but could range anywhere from one to seven days, and more likely is from one to four days.

If I have a family member sick at home with H1N1 swine flu, should I go to work?

If you live in areas where people have been identified with the H1N1 swine flu and you 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. Staying at home means you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

Can H1N1 swine flu re-infection occur?

The human body produces antibodies (parts of your immune system that can recognize and attack germs if you are exposed to the germ again) that offer a level of protection from being re-infected from viruses; however, studies are ongoing about how this particular virus is transmitted and the likelihood of being re-infected. Some tips to prevent infection include: those who experience illness should take time to fully recover; stay home from work or school if illness is suspected to cut down on exposure to Others; frequent hand washing cuts down exposure and re-exposure to contagious diseases; use of germicide gels that kill germs on contact is suggested; using spray disinfectants keeps surfaces clean.

Should sick people attend social gatherings?

If you are sick, you should limit your contact with other people as much as possible and avoid attending or participating in events or other social gatherings. In all situations, both children and adults should follow basic health and hygiene practices. These practices include regular hand washing, covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue into the trash, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Medicines & Prescriptions

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 swine flu infection?

Yes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of antivirals for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with H1N1 swine flu virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquids 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. The priority use for influenza antiviral drugs during is to treat severe influenza illness (for example hospitalized patients) and people who are sick that have a condition which places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications.

Do I need a prescription for these medicines?

Yes, you need a prescription. Contact your physician on how to get the antivirals.

Testing for H1N1

My doctor says I have H1N1 swine flu, but he won't test me.

Currently, almost all influenza in Florida is caused by the H1N1 swine flu. So if you have flu-like symptoms, it is very likely you have H1N1 swine flu. Please remember, your doctor is the expert on diagnosing illnesses and determining what tests should be ordered for you. You and your doctor are partners in your care. Ask questions, follow your doctor's instructions, and be sure you keep your doctor informed of any changes in your condition.

H1N1 Vaccine

I hear a vaccine will be available. Can you tell me more about it?

A new vaccine against H1N1 swine flu will be available in the coming months as an option. People at greatest risk for H1N1 swine flu include children, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease.

When will the vaccine be available?

At this time, we expect to receive the vaccine in mid-October. There is a possibility that some vaccine will be available for shipping starting in late September.

Where can I get the H1N1 swine flu vaccination when it becomes available?

Each county will provide vaccination clinics at a number of locations. Suggest: Each county is developing plans for holding vaccination clinics throughout the county. Once the vaccine becomes available counties will announce those locations and the process to obtain a vaccination. CDC has

provided guidance to public health officials as to which groups of people are at higher risk for contracting the H1N1 swine flu virus and the Florida Department of Health will follow those recommendations.

Will the H1N1 swine flu vaccine be mandatory?

No, the vaccine is voluntary.

How much will the H1N1 swine flu vaccine cost?

The vaccine is free. Private physicians can charge patients and administrative fee that is no higher than the regional Medicare immunization administrative fee. Vaccines provided by county health departments in their large immunization clinics are free of charge with no administrative fee.

How Far Apart Should You Get the Seasonal Flu Vaccine and the H1N1 Vaccine?

At this point, it appears that you could receive the seasonal and H1N1 vaccine at the same time. The clinical trials will provide more information on this possible way to get you flu shots.

Can seasonal vaccine and H1N1 swine flu vaccine be administered at the same time?

Clinical trials are exploring this question. It is anticipated that seasonal vaccine and H1N1 swine flu vaccines may be administered together.

For whom will H1N1 swine flu vaccine be recommended?

Vaccination efforts initially focus on 5 target groups: vaccination for pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years, and people ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for H1N1 swine flu because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

When will the rest of the population be able to get vaccinated with H1N1 flu vaccine?

Once the demand for vaccine for the prioritized groups has been met at the local level, programs and providers should also begin vaccinating everyone from the ages of 25 through 64 years.

When will those older than 65 be able to get the vaccine with H1N1 flu vaccine?

Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. However, once vaccine demand among younger age groups has been met, programs and providers should offer vaccination to people 65 or older.

Will there be enough vaccine available?

We do not expect that there will be a shortage of H1N1 swine flu vaccine, yet flu vaccine availability and demand can be unpredictable and there is a potential that initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities.

School Information

Will they close my child's school?

This is unlikely but possible. CDC and the Florida Department of Health have made recommendations to school officials about how to manage influenza-like illness in a school setting without dismissing schools. You need to call your local school district or the school's principal for the most up-to-date information. The decision to dismiss schools will be made by your local school district, and will depend on the situation in your local area. The Florida Department of Health provides recommendations and

guidance to schools on whether they should close or take certain steps to ensure the safety and welfare of the students and staff, which are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Local school boards and other local officials make decisions whether to dismiss or open schools.

Who makes the decision about whether schools should be dismissed?

Local school districts will make the decision of whether to dismiss schools. They will consult with state and local health and emergency management officials to make that decision.

The Florida Department of Health provides recommendations and guidance to school districts on whether they should close or take certain steps to ensure the safety and welfare of the students and staff. These recommendations are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hotline, Websites

1-877-352-3581 | 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EDT, seven days a week | English, Spanish and Creole

www.myflusafety.com

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

