

NOVEL H1N1 INFLUENZA: PREVENTION & TREATMENT

The following information on Swine Flu is from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More information on the current Swine Flu investigation can be found from the CDC and other public health organizations at the links provided in the text below.

What can I do to help protect myself from getting sick?

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. 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.
- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners or disposable wipes are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home if you are sick for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. This is to keep from infecting others and spreading the virus further.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- **with soap and warm water** -- that you wash for **15 to 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.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

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. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where people have been identified with novel 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. Staying at home means that 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

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.

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

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with novel 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. During the current pandemic, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs during is to treat severe influenza illness (for example hospitalized patients) and people who are sick who have a condition that places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications.

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What are the plans for developing novel H1N1 vaccine?

Vaccines are the most powerful public health tool for control of influenza, and the U.S. government is working closely with manufacturers to take steps in the process to manufacture a novel H1N1 vaccine. Working together with scientists in the public and private sector, CDC has isolated the new H1N1 virus and modified the virus so that it can be used to make hundreds of millions of doses of vaccine. Vaccine manufacturers are now using these materials to begin vaccine production. Making vaccine is a multi-step process which takes several months to complete. Candidate vaccines will be tested in clinical trials over the few months.

When is it expected that the novel H1N1 vaccine will be available?

The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. More specific dates cannot be provided at this time as vaccine availability depends on several factors including manufacturing time and time needed to conduct clinical trials

Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the novel H1N1 flu?

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel H1N1 flu.

Where will the vaccine be available?

Every state is developing a vaccine delivery plan. Vaccine will be available in a combination of settings such as vaccination clinics organized by local health departments, healthcare provider offices, schools, and other private settings, such as pharmacies and workplaces.

Where can I get more information on novel H1N1?

For more information, please refer to included information and guideline documents generated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health organizations:

- CDC's novel H1N1 information: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- US Department of Health and Human Services-Pandemic Influenza Plan: <http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/plan/>
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance: <http://www.osha.gov/dsg/guidance/avian-flu.html>
- The official U.S. government web site for information on pandemic, seasonal, and 2009-H1N1 influenza: www.pandemicflu.gov