



Alameda County Public Health Department

H1N1 (Swine) Flu Frequently Asked Questions October 13, 2009

| H1N1 Flu Basics | |
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| Pandemic | On June 11, 2009 the World Health Organization (WHO) raised H1N1 to Phase 6, pandemic level. This designation means H1N1 is being spread easily from person-to-person across the globe. Phase 6 does not address the severity of H1N1 illness; it does call for global implementation of measures to address the spread and treatment of this virus. |
| 1. What is H1N1 flu (swine flu)? | H1N1 (also referred to as “swine flu” or “swine influenza A”) is an influenza virus causing illness in people. This 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. How serious have the U.S. cases been? | Most cases of swine flu in the U.S. to date have been mild and have not required medical care or treatment with antivirals. |
| 4. 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. |
| 5. How is H1N1 flu diagnosed? | To diagnose H1N1 flu, a nose, throat or blood sample would need to be taken and tested for influenza. In Alameda County, suspected cases of H1N1 flu are sent to the state public health laboratory for confirmation. |

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| <p>6. Is there treatment for H1N1 (Swine) Flu in humans?</p> | <p>At this time, CDC advises the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with H1N1 Flu viruses. If your health care provider confirms that you have H1N1 Flu, they will advise treatment for you.</p> |
| <p>7. Is there an H1N1 vaccine?</p> | <p>Yes, initial supplies of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine have arrived in Alameda County. Check with your primary care provider to see if they have ordered and received H1N1 vaccine. More vaccine is expected to arrive. Please check www.acphd.org for up-to-date information.</p> |
| <p>8. How serious is this situation?</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>The Spread of H1N1 Flu</p> | |
| <p>9. How does H1N1 flu spread?</p> | <p>H1N1 flu is thought to spread in the same way that the seasonal flu spreads. When infected people fail to cover their cough or sneeze, flu germs are propelled through the air and land on the nose or mouth of another person or object. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu germs on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.</p> |
| <p>10. If I have H1N1 flu, when can I pass it to someone else?</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>11. How long can viruses live outside the body?</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>12. Do pigs carry this virus and can I catch this virus from a pig?</p> | <p>At this time, there is no evidence that pigs 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.</p> |

| Vaccination Information | |
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| 13. Who can get the vaccine? | As priority groups are subject to change, please check this link for the most up-to-date information. http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm |
| 14. Where can you get it? | You should go to your regular source of healthcare to get the vaccine. If you do not have a regular source of healthcare and are among the priority groups you can go to the specified vaccination sites. Sites will be established in the following cities: Albany, Oakland, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore, Newark, Pleasanton, San Leandro. For up to date information check: www.acphd.gov |
| 15. How many doses are required? | The CDC recommends that people 10 years and older get one dose, children 6 months to 9 years old receive two doses. Infants younger than 6 months of age are too young to get the 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines. CDC recommends that the two doses of 2009 H1N1 vaccine be separated by at least 2-4 weeks. |
| 16. Will the seasonal flu vaccine protect against H1N1? | No, the seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the 2009 H1N1 flu. It will, however, protect you from three other flu viruses. |
| 17. Can I get the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine at the same time? | Inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine can be administered at the same visit as any other vaccine. Live 2009 H1N1 vaccine can be administered at the same visit as any other live or inactivated vaccine except seasonal live attenuated influenza vaccine. |
| 18. Should I get vaccinated against 1009 H1N1 if I have had the flu since Spring 2009? | If you were ill but do not know if you had 2009 H1N1 infection, you should get vaccinated, if your doctor recommends it. If you have had 2009 H1N1 flu, as confirmed by an RT-PCR test, you should have some immunity against 2009 H1N1 flu and can choose not to get the vaccine. However, vaccination of a person with some immunity would not be harmful. |
| How to Prevent H1N1 Flu | |
| 17. What can I do to protect myself from getting sick? | Take these steps to prevent the spread of germs and to protect your health: <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. Rub the cleaner between your hands until dry. • Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash immediately or flush it down the toilet after you use it. • Try to avoid close contact with sick people. • 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 to keep from making others sick. • Click here for more information on what you can do to protect yourself from getting infected: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm |
| If You Get Sick | |
| <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 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 |