

CATCH IT, BIN IT, KILL IT

WHAT IS H1N1 (SWINE) FLU AND HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM ORDINARY FLU?

H1N1 (Swine) flu is a respiratory disease and has some elements of a virus found in pigs. It has been confirmed in a number of countries and it is spreading from human to human, which could lead to what is referred to as a pandemic flu outbreak. Pandemic flu is different from ordinary flu because it's a new flu virus that appears in humans and spreads very quickly from person to person worldwide. Because it's a new virus, no one will have immunity to it and everyone could be at risk of catching it. This includes healthy adults as well as older people, young children and those with existing medical conditions

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu. People with H1N1 (swine) flu typically have a fever or high temperature (over 38°C/100.4°F) and two or more of the following symptoms:

- cough
- shortness of breath
- headache
- runny nose
- sore throat
- unusual tiredness,
- loss of appetite
- aching muscles
- diarrhoea or vomiting

HOW DOES H1N1 (SWINE) FLU SPREAD?

Flu viruses are made up of tiny particles that can be spread through the droplets that come out of your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. When you cough or sneeze without covering your nose and mouth with a tissue, those droplets can spread and others will be at risk of breathing them in. If you cough or sneeze into your hand, those droplets and the germs in them are then easily spread from your hand to any hard surfaces that you touch, and they can live on those surfaces for some time. Everyday items such as door handles, computer keyboards, mobile and ordinary phones and the TV remote control are all common surfaces where flu viruses can be found. If other people touch these surfaces and then touch their faces, the germs can enter their systems and they can become infected. That's how all cold and flu viruses, including H1N1 (Swine) flu, are passed on from person to person.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MYSELF AND OTHERS AGAINST FLU?

The best thing you can do to protect yourself is to follow good hygiene practices. These will help to slow the spread of the virus and will be the single most effective thing you can do to protect yourself and others from infection. You may have seen face masks being given out to the public in other countries on the news. However, the available scientific evidence shows that these basic face masks don't protect people from becoming infected. The best way to protect yourself and stop the spread of flu viruses is by using and disposing of tissues and washing your hands, as explained below.

When you cough or sneeze it is especially important to follow the rules of good hygiene to prevent the spread of germs:

- Always carry tissues.
- Use clean tissues to cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze.
- Bin the tissues immediately after one use.
- Wash your hands with soap (or sanitizer gel) and hot water often
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth - germs spread this way

There's a simple way to remember this:

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WHEN ARE PEOPLE MOST INFECTIOUS?

People are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms. They can continue to spread the virus (for example, in coughs and sneezes) for up to five days (seven days in children). People become less infectious as their symptoms subside, and once their symptoms are gone they are no longer considered infectious to others.

SHOULD I AVOID CONTACT WITH PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF HAVING H1N1 (SWINE) FLU?

People with suspected H1N1 (swine) flu should stay at home and restrict their contact with other people.

People without symptoms should continue their normal life, including children who can continue to attend a school with a confirmed case of H1N1 (swine) flu. There is no need to avoid contact with people who might simply have come into contact with those with the illness, such as the parents of children at schools with a confirmed case but who do not have flu symptoms.

WHEN SHOULD I GO BACK TO SCHOOL OR WORK?

You can go back to school or work when you are feeling well and are no longer infectious. Adults are most infectious soon after they develop symptoms and remain infectious while their symptoms continue, which is usually for up to five days. They can normally return to work within seven days. In children, symptoms continue for up to seven days and they can normally return to school within 10 days.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I'M INFECTED?

If you have flu-like symptoms and are concerned that you may have H1N1 (swine) flu, then you must stay at home. Phone the school nurse, your doctor or check your condition using the Salud Responde of Servicio Andaluz de Salud 902 50 50 60.

In particular phone your doctor immediately if you have flu symptoms and:

- you have a serious existing illness
- you are pregnant
- you have a sick child under one
- your condition suddenly gets much worse
- your condition is still getting worse after seven days (five days for a child)

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

There are some other useful actions you can take now to prepare in case H1N1 (Swine) flu becomes more widespread:

- At home, clean hard surfaces, such as door handles, often and thoroughly.
- Confirm a network of flu friends (friends and relatives) who could help you if you fall ill. They could collect medicines and other supplies for you so you do not have to leave home and possibly spread the virus.
- Know your social security (SS) number and those of other family members. Keep them in a safe place. It is not essential to have your SS number in order to receive treatment, but it can help SS staff to find your health records. You will be able to find your SS number on your medical card or other items such as prescribed medication, a letter from your GP or hospital appointment card/letter.
- Have a thermometer and enough cold and cough remedies in your medicine cupboard, in case you or your family gets H1N1 (swine) flu.
- Keep up to date with the latest information on H1N1 (Swine) flu and follow health advice and instructions from the school and local authorities. If H1N1 (Swine) flu spreads, you need to keep informed so that you know what else you can do to protect yourself and your family. As the situation changes, you should keep up to date by keeping in touch with school, checking the internet and e-mail, looking out for announcements, and watching TV and listening to the radio.

INFORMATION

Websites in Spanish

http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/salud/sites/csalud/contenidos/Informacion_General/c_3_informacion_sobre/gripe_porcina/pr eguntas_respuestas_gripe_porcina?perfil=ciud

<http://espanol.cdc.gov/enes/h1n1flu/>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/fag/es/index.html>

Websites in English

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Swineflu/DG_177831

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pandemic-flu/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>

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