

## **H1N1 (Swine Flu) Influenza Facts For Patients**

### **What is H1N1 influenza?**

H1N1 Influenza also known as the Swine flu is a respiratory illness that is contagious. It is caused by the H1N1 virus that normally infects pigs (swine). The virus now spreads to humans and is easily passed from person to person. The illness can be mild to severe and at times can lead to death.

### **What are the signs and symptoms?**

Fever ( $\geq 100^{\circ}$  F) and one of the following: cough, sore throat, nasal congestion, and runny nose.

Additional symptoms: Diarrhea, vomiting, body and muscle aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and shortness of breath.

### **How does it spread?**

According to the CDC, this flu can be spread the same way as the regular flu through close contact with persons who have or is suspected of having the H1N1 flu. Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet, kissing, embracing, sharing eating or drinking utensils, physical examination, or any other contact between persons that will result in exposure to respiratory droplets. The droplets pass through the air and deposits on the mouth or nose of people nearby when the person with the virus sneezes, coughs, laughs or talk. H1N1 virus can also spread when a person touches the respiratory droplets on another person or on objects (such as desks, chairs, tables, bathroom surfaces, kitchen counters and other surfaces) and then touches their own mouth or nose (or the mouth or nose of another person) before washing their hands.

To reduce your chances of getting H1N1, contact your doctor to find out if you need treatment if:

- You have had contact with someone with H1N1 flu.
- You have had contact with someone being treated for exposure to H1N1 flu.

### **What can I do to stay healthy?**

- Cover your nose and mouth with tissue when you sneeze or cough and throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often for at least 15 seconds, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol hand cleaners containing at least 60 percent alcohol can also be used (water is not needed).
- To reduce the spread of germs, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. (Talk to your doctor about medicines to prevent the flu if you live with someone who has H1N1).
- Make plans on how to care for sick family members.
- Have plenty of household, emergency and health supplies available. (Tylenol®, non-perishable foods)

Current vaccination information: According to the CDC a vaccine is being developed that is expected to be available in the Fall of 2009, and those at higher risk should be vaccinated, including pregnant women,

household contacts of children who are under 6 months of age, children and young people between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age, non-elderly adults with underlying risk or medical conditions that increases complications from the flu, and healthcare workers and emergency medical service personnel. Contact your physician to discuss vaccination when the H1N1 vaccine becomes available.

### **What should I do if I get sick with H1N1 Flu?**

- Pay extra attention to how your body is feeling if H1N1 flu is in your community.
- Contact your physician if symptoms occur and your physician will decide if testing and treatment is needed.
- Avoid close contact with other people as much as possible.
- Cover your nose and mouth with tissue when you sneeze or cough and throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often for at least 15 seconds each time, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol hand cleaners containing at least 60 % alcohol can also be used (water is not needed).
- If you are sick stay at home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom free for 24 hours, whichever one is longer. This means avoiding normal activities that include work, travel, school, public gatherings, shopping and other social events. Only leave your home to seek medical care



Reference: Centers for Disease Control

Resources: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

07/31/09