

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

H1N1 flu (Swine Flu) is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses. The current outbreak of H1N1 flu is a contagious respiratory disease that has recently spread from Mexico to the US, Canada, and other countries. The disease can be spread from human to human. The symptoms of H1N1 flu include: sore throat, body aches, fever, cough, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.

How Flu Spreads

Spread of this H1N1 virus is thought to be happening 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. People may become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes.

What You Should do to Keep from Getting the Flu

- First and most important: wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Try to stay in good general health by getting plenty of sleep, staying physically active, managing your stress, drinking plenty of fluids, and eating nutritious food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Remember shaking hands will spread germs to others.
- Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. You can routinely decontaminate surfaces touched by individuals. *See below for more information.*
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Proper Hand Washing Technique

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner. Rub your hand vigorously together using soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry.

Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

What You Should Do If You Get Sick

If you live in San Diego County and you become ill with influenza-like symptoms you may want to contact your health care provider, particularly if your symptoms are severe. Your health care provider will determine whether H1N1 flu testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

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 skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- 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

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

Surface Decontamination

The virus can live outside the body for up to 2 hours and sometimes longer. These viruses spread when someone sneezes or coughs. Low concentrations of bleach (sodium hypochlorite) are effective against flu viruses. A 10% bleach (Clorox) solution (*see below*) is a good disinfectant for flu viruses. You can use this solution of bleach on most hard surfaces such as counter tops, sinks, tables, floors, showers, door knobs, light switches, etc. Apply the bleach solution in well ventilated areas. Bleach is caustic so follow product label directions.

To prepare a solution for effectively decontaminating surfaces, mix one part bleach (sodium hypochlorite 5.25%) with nine parts water. To maintain an effective chlorine concentration this solution must be used with 24 hours. Always use eye protection when pouring and mixing bleach.

Disinfect shared office equipment at work by spraying the surface with freshly made 10% bleach solution. Let it stand on contact with the surface for at least one minute and then wipe down with a disposable towel. At home, remember to disinfect your phone, remote control, door knobs, and children's toys.

Commercial disinfectant wipes such as "Clorox wipes" are also effective at disinfecting work surfaces and may be more convenient.

For more information refer to the following: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>