

# H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

## What do I need to know and do?

2009 H1N1 Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a new strain of influenza virus. In June 2009, H1N1 was declared a pandemic - meaning it is everywhere in the world.

Flu viruses spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people may catch flu by touching something infected and then touching their mouth or nose. A vaccine for H1N1 flu is expected to be available in late fall 2009.

Who should get priority for the H1N1 vaccination?

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for a child less than 6 mos
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- People between 6 months and 24 years old
- Adults ages 25 through 64 with chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems
- People over 65 should get a seasonal flu shot but **are not** a priority population for H1N1 vaccination

Visit [www.meckhealth.org/H1N1](http://www.meckhealth.org/H1N1) or call 311 (704-336-7600) in the late fall to see if the new vaccine is available.

## Are there medicines to treat H1N1 infection?

Yes. Antivirals are medicines that fight flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Doctors may prescribe them as pills, liquids or in an inhaler and are usually only for people who are at highest risk for complications from the flu. Antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick, usually within two days of developing symptoms.

If you are a caretaker: Monitor yourself and household members for flu symptoms and contact a health care provider if symptoms occur. See other side for additional care information.

## H1N1 FLU SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

- |                                      |                                     |   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fever       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cough      | <input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sore throat | <input type="checkbox"/> Body aches | <input type="checkbox"/> Vomiting             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chills      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue    | <input type="checkbox"/> Runny or stuffy nose |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headache    |                                     |   |

## SEEK EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE IF:

- 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
- In babies, bluish or gray skin color, lack of responsiveness or extreme irritation

Seasonal flu vaccine is still important. Do not wait for the H1N1 vaccine to arrive; get your seasonal flu vaccine first!

## TIPS TO PREVENT THE FLU:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If you get sick with flu, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from making them sick. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Keep frequently touched common surfaces clean.
- Get the recommended seasonal flu vaccine when it becomes available.
- Get the recommended H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle through rest, diet, exercise, and relaxation.

# Caring for Someone Who is Sick with Flu

## Steps to Lessen the Spread of Flu in the Home

When providing care to a household member who is sick with influenza, the most important ways to protect yourself and others who are not sick are to:

- Keep the sick person away from other people as much as possible, especially others who are at high risk for complications from influenza.
- Remind the sick person to cover their coughs, and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often.

## Placement of the Sick Person

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house.
- Unless necessary for medical care or other necessities, people who are sick with an influenza-like-illness should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible.

## Protect Other People in the Home

- The sick person should not have visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- If possible, have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person.
- Antiviral medications can be used to prevent the flu, so check with your health care provider to see if some people in the home should use antiviral medications.
- If possible, sick people should use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household disinfectant.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or dedicate cloth towels to each person in the household. For example, have different colored towels for each person.
- If possible, consideration should be given to maintaining good ventilation in shared household areas.



## Household Cleaning, Laundry, and Waste Disposal

- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.
- Wash linens (such as bed sheets and towels) by using household laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting.
- Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.

## Using Facemasks

If people with the flu need to leave the home (for medical care), they should wear a facemask if available, and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

- Avoid close contact (3 to 6 feet away) with the sick person as much as possible.
- Used facemasks should be taken off and placed immediately in the regular trash so they don't touch anything else.
- After you take off a facemask, clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- If you must have close contact with the sick person (for example, hold a sick infant), spend the least amount of time possible in close contact and try to wear a facemask (for example, surgical mask).



Mecklenburg County Health Department  
**H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)**

For more information visit  
[www.meckhealth.org/h1n1](http://www.meckhealth.org/h1n1),  
call 311 or 704-336-7600

*Information  
courtesy of  
the Centers  
for Disease  
Control and  
Prevention.*