



## IMPORTANT H1N1 (Swine) FLU FACTS (Updated 8/11/2009)

### **What is H1N1 (swine) flu?**

H1N1 flu (originally called “swine flu”) is an illness in people caused by a new flu virus. Because it is new, the general population is not immune to it. It is spreading from person-to-person, in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. It has spread all over the world and is currently well established in California and the bay area.

### **How is H1N1 (swine) flu different from seasonal influenza?**

H1N1 is a new flu virus. Because H1N1 is new, people do not have immunity to it, so it can spread quickly through the population. New flu viruses are unpredictable: H1N1 flu may change and become more severe as time goes on.

### **How serious is H1N1 flu?**

Right now, the symptoms and severity of H1N1 flu are similar to seasonal flu—most people are having a mild case of the flu, but some are having more serious symptoms. The H1N1 virus is expected to continue causing illness, hospitalizations, and death in the coming months. However, as a new virus, H1N1 could change to cause more severe illness. If that happens, the number of hospitalizations and deaths could be much greater than we see with seasonal flu. As a comparison, seasonal flu causes about 4,000 deaths in California every year.

### **Hasn't H1N1 gone away?**

No. The H1N1 flu is well established in our community. Most flu infections in California and around the world are currently from the H1N1 flu virus. New viruses like H1N1 sometimes appear in “waves” – the flu spreads rapidly then seems to go away, only to return again. H1N1 continues to affect people, even over the summer when flu is usually not active.

### **What can we expect to happen in the fall and winter?**

Public health officials are monitoring the flu carefully for changes that may occur. We are learning more about it every day. Since viruses are able to change frequently, experts are concerned that this flu could become more severe in the fall, causing more deaths and hospitalizations. See “Prevention and Preparation” below for what you can do to protect yourself from the flu.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu?**

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are like the symptoms of seasonal flu:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea and vomiting (less common)

### **What does “high risk” mean?**

A person who is at high risk is someone who is more likely to have complications (be hospitalized or die) from the H1N1 flu. Like with seasonal flu, people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart and lung disease or immune disorders) may have more complications if they get sick with H1N1 flu.



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### Who is at high risk?

People at high risk are:

- Pregnant women
- People with chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory conditions, compromised immune systems or neuromuscular diseases
- Infants and children under 5 years of age.

### What should I do if I'm high risk?

If you become ill with flu symptoms or have had close contact with someone who may have the H1N1 flu, call your health care provider for advice. Your health care provider will determine whether you need to be seen and if you need antiviral drugs.

***It is especially important for you to get both your regular seasonal flu shot and your H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available.***

### How can I tell if someone sitting next to me has H1N1 flu?

You can't. The virus is currently well established in the Bay area. It is spreading from person-to-person without regard for borders, race, or ethnicity. If someone has the H1N1 symptoms (see question above), it couldn't hurt to keep your distance. Try to stay 3- 6 feet away from someone who has flu symptoms.

### How do you catch H1N1 flu?

The virus spreads mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with the flu. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu virus on it and then touching their mouth and nose.

### When is a person most contagious?

People with the flu are contagious 1 day before symptoms begin until 24 hours after the fever symptoms are over. Children, especially younger children, may spread flu germs for longer periods. This is why people with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone.

## PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

### What can I do to protect my family and myself?

There are everyday steps you can take. Practice these steps now and throughout the fall and winter.

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. Cough into your sleeve.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home when you are sick. Return to school or work only when your fever has been gone for 24 hours.

### What is the way to "cover my cough or sneeze"?

The best way to cover your cough is to cough or sneeze into your sleeve, NOT your hand or a tissue. This way you will not spread germs by touching things afterwards. If you cough into your hand or a tissue, throw the tissue away and wash your hands right away.



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### What is the best way to wash my hands?

Washing your hands often protects you from all kinds of germs. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice through). Soap and water are best. If they are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand cleaners may be used instead.

### What can I do to prepare?

- Talk to your employer about how you will manage if you or your children are ill
- Make plans for childcare for children who become ill
- ***Plan to get your flu vaccine: both the seasonal and novel H1N1 vaccines.***

### Should I wear a facemask or respirator?

If you are sick with flu symptoms wearing a mask will protect those around you. You may be asked to wear a mask if you go to your doctor's office with flu symptoms. You don't need to wear a respirator unless you're taking care of a person who's sick with H1N1 flu. Wearing masks is a popular reaction to respiratory outbreaks in other parts of the world, but it's not a step that the U.S. government has recommended for the current outbreak. The CDC has an online guide to using masks and respirators to prevent spreading flu germs at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm)

## IF YOU GET SICK

### What should I do if I get sick?

If you are sick, you should stay away from other people as much as you can to keep from spreading your illness. *Stay home!* People with flu-like illness should stay home and not attend school or go into the community except to seek medical care for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. **Please do not go to the Emergency Room unless you have a medical emergency.**

### When should I see a doctor?

Like the seasonal flu, most people who become ill do not need to be tested or treated. If you are pregnant or have a chronic illness you should consult your provider if you have questions or concerns. If you do not have health insurance or a regular doctor, you may contact your local public health department for referral information. In Berkeley, call (510) 981-5300.

### If I think I have the H1N1 (swine) flu should I get tested?

Testing is currently recommended only for hospitalized individuals. Most people recover from H1N1 flu without needing any special medication or testing.

### When should I get medical care right away?

Adults should get emergency medical care right away if they have:

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or continuing vomiting

Children should be taken to emergency medical care right away if they have:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color



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- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

### **Are there medicines to treat H1N1 flu?**

Yes. They are only recommended for those hospitalized due to H1N1 complications or for people who are in high-risk groups (see definition of "high risk" above). Most people recover from H1N1 flu without needing any special medication. Your doctor will help you decide whether medication is right for you. The prescription antiviral medicines oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) can be used to treat H1N1 flu.

## FOR PARENTS

### **Are schools going to close again?**

CDC has issued new guidance for schools involving managing student illness and exposure (ill students stay at home or are sent home if become sick at school) rather than dismissing all students from school.

Berkeley Public Health is working closely with BUSD, private schools and childcare providers to balance the risks of flu spreading in the schools with the disruption this will cause with children and their families. Schools and childcare facilities are places the flu can spread easily. If the virus changes to cause more severe disease later on, or if absenteeism at schools is so high that the schools cannot function, school dismissal may happen again. Schools will not close because of one or two cases of H1N1 flu.

### **What do I need to consider if my child has to stay at home sick?**

- Do not send a sick child to another group child care program
- Make plans for home care for children that become ill
- Talk to your employer about how you will manage if you or your child becomes ill
- Check with your teacher about home learning activities

### **Can my sick child go back to school as soon as he or she feels better?**

Students and staff with flu like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.

## FLU VACCINES

### **How many flu shots do I need this year?**

Three! The regular seasonal flu shot and two doses of H1N1 vaccine.

### **When is it expected that the novel H1N1 vaccine will be available?**

The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. We will be updating our website with exact dates as soon as we can.

### **Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the novel H1N1 flu?**

The seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against the novel H1N1 flu.



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### **Can the seasonal vaccine and the novel H1N1 vaccine be given at the same time?**

At this point, it appears that they can be both taken at the same time. However, we expect the seasonal vaccine to be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. The regular seasonal flu can still cause illness this fall and winter. You should get your seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available.

### **Should some people get the H1N1 vaccine first before the general population?**

Yes. Certain groups should receive the novel H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These key populations are:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency services personnel
- Young persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years
- People under 65 years of age with chronic health conditions (see “high risk” above)

### **Where will the H1N1 vaccine be available?**

We will be letting Berkeley residents know as soon as this information becomes available. Vaccine will be available at doctor's offices, pharmacies, and other sites. Please check our website for updates. [www.CityofBerkeley.info/publichealth](http://www.CityofBerkeley.info/publichealth)

## OTHER

### **Is it safe to travel?**

The H1N1 is widespread and established in many countries including the US. Therefore there are no restrictions in travel to any countries at this point. Travel notices are available on the CDC Swine Flu web page at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). At this time, there are no restrictions for travel within the U.S.

### **Can I get H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork, bacon, and ham?**

No. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information, please see the following websites or call the Berkeley City Public Health Division at 510-981-5300 or call the California Department of Public Health H1N1 Flu Hotline at 1-888-865-0564, 8am to 5pm- 7 days a week. City of Berkeley Health and Human Services:

[www.CityofBerkeley.info/publichealth](http://www.CityofBerkeley.info/publichealth)

California Department of Public Health:

[www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/SwineInfluenza.aspx)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)

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