

H1N1 Q&A Sheet

What is novel H1N1 (swine flu)?

Novel H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

How does novel H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 virus is thought to occur 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. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Can you catch swine flu from eating pork?

No. H1N1 flu viruses are not transmitted by food. You cannot get H1N1 flu from eating pork or pork products.

How long can the flu virus remain on surfaces -- for example, if an infected person sneezes on a table or desk?

Studies have shown that flu virus can survive on surfaces and can infect a person for up to 2-8 hours after being deposited on the surface. Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

What kills influenza virus?

Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics), and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time. For example, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used to clean hands. The gels should be rubbed into hands until they are dry.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 are the same as seasonal flu except for diarrhea and vomiting. The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?

Yes. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with novel H1N1 flu virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. During the current pandemic, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs during is to treat severe influenza illness (for example hospitalized patients) and people who are sick who have a condition that places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus. However, a novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be ready for the public in the fall. As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against seasonal influenza.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

Where can you get seasonal flu vaccinations?

City of Independence, MO Health Department Seasonal Flu Clinic (Operated in conjunction with Lafayette, Caldwell and Carroll counties.)

Location	Adventure Oasis Parking Lot 2100 Hub Drive (One block west of 23rd St. & 291 Hwy.) Independence, MO 64057
Type	Drive-thru Clinic
Hours	7 am - 2 pm
Cost	\$20 or Medicare Part B
Anything to bring?	ID, Medicare/Medicaid cards, if applicable
Other	Questions? Call 816-325-7185

Seasonal flu vaccine can also be obtained at several Independence health care provider locations.

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

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel H1N1 flu.

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

It is anticipated that seasonal flu and novel H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day. However, we expect the seasonal vaccine to be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. The usual seasonal influenza viruses are still expected to cause illness this fall and winter. Individuals are encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available.

How many flu vaccines do I need?

You will need the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine this year.

Seasonal flu vaccine should be available in our area by mid-September, and health officials urge you to get a seasonal flu shot as soon as possible. Because the H1N1 virus is new, or "novel," an entirely new H1N1 vaccine had to be created. Testing on this vaccine is underway now, and health officials hope to have vaccinations available by mid-October. Two doses of this vaccine may be needed and must be administered 21-28 days apart. Because there may not be enough for everyone to get vaccinations right away, the Centers for Disease Control has identified priority groups -- those people who are at the most risk -- to get vaccinated first. These priority groups include:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

