

H1N1 Influenza--Questions and Answers for Students

What is H1N1 flu?

Novel H1N1 (referred to “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in the United States in April 2009. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of H1N1 flu was underway.

Is the H1N1 virus contagious?

The H1N1 virus is highly contagious and is spread the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza.

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

People infected with seasonal and H1N1 influenza shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after. If you become ill you should avoid contact with other people until fever is gone for 24 hours without taking fever reducing medications like Advil (Ibuprofen) or Tylenol (Acetaminophen).

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus include fever and body aches. Also, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

How severe is illness associated with H1N1 flu virus?

Illness with the H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. About 70% of people who have been hospitalized with this virus have had one or more medical conditions placing them at “high risk” of serious complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma, kidney disease and anyone with a weakened immune condition.

Take these steps to protect yourself from getting sick:

1. **Cover your mouth and nose** – Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or cough/sneeze into your elbow – not your hands! It may prevent you from spreading disease to others.
2. **Clean your hands** – Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Alcohol based hand cleaners are effective too.
3. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth** –Germs spread that way.
4. **Avoid sharing drinks, food, utensils**
5. **Avoid contact with people who are ill—maintain at least a 3 foot distance from an ill person.**
6. **Avoid being in confined, poorly ventilated spaces with a person who is ill.**
7. **Practice other good health habits** – Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

What if I become ill?

If you become ill with fever and body aches, you should stay home from classes, work, and activities and avoid contact with other people. Nasal congestion, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are also symptoms associated with influenza.

- You should avoid contact with others and stay home until fever is gone for 24 hours without taking fever reducing medications (disposable thermometers and flu care kits are available from residence hall RDs or at the Student Health Center). Use alcohol based cleaner or wipes to disinfect your living area (door knobs, light switches, phones, counters). Use your own hand towel.
- Email your professors, supervisors, coaches that you have influenza like symptoms and that you won't be attending class and activities until fever is gone for 24 hours without medication.
- If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications (you have a chronic medical condition which include: asthma, diabetes, pregnancy, heart disease, kidney disease, auto immune disorder) contact your health care provider or seek medical care to determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.
- In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:
 1. Flu like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
 2. Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 3. Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 4. Sudden dizziness
 5. Confusion
 6. Severe or persistent vomiting

**For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/ or <http://www.pacificu.edu/pandemicflu/>
Information compiled from CDC and provided by Pacific University Student Health Center**