Public Health

PANDEMIC FLU (H1N1) Flu
Frequently Asked Questions

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu include the sudden start of fever with a cough and/or sore throat and body aches. Other symptoms include lack of energy and appetite, headache, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, and, in some people, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Most people recover without medical treatment.

How severe is H1N1 flu?

So far H1N1 flu virus has been similar to the seasonal flu we see each year. Most people recover without medical attention. Common seasonal flu can cause mild to severe illness and sometimes leads to death. Each year in the United States, about 36,000 people die from flu-related complications and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized. Some people are more likely to become very ill if they catch the H1N1 flu virus: children under age 5, pregnant women, and people of any age with chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, heart or lung problems or diabetes. If you or your child has a serious medical condition, ask your doctor or clinic how to stay healthy in flu season.

Influenza is unpredictable and viruses change. Health officials encourage everyone to get a seasonal flu vaccine annually.

What should I do if I am sick?

Most people with influenza recover at home. They need plenty of rest and should drink clear fluids and take over-the-counter pain relievers to reduce fever and body aches.

If you are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema, check with your doctor about special care you may need. If your symptoms are severe or quickly worsen, seek medical attention.

Health experts recommend that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others. You should stay home until symptoms are gone and you've had no fever for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication.

Seek emergency help for children if they're having trouble breathing, not drinking enough liquids, vomiting severely, not waking up or interacting, irritable or their symptoms return after improving.

Seek medical help for adults if they're having trouble breathing, having chest or abdominal pains, experiencing dizziness or confusion, vomiting or their symptoms return after improving.

What should I do if my child has flu symptoms?

- Keep him/her home from school and other public places, including child care, church and stores.
- Notify your child's school that he/she has flu-like symptoms.
- Use the same judgment about taking your child to the doctor as you do during seasonal flu. If you do choose to see a doctor, call first.
- Keep your child home from school and child care until the symptoms are gone and he or she has had no fever for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication.
- Don't give your child aspirin or any medication that contains aspirin.

How can my family and I prevent catching H1N1 flu?

- Wash your hands frequently or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and teach your family to do the same
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with tissues or cough into the inside of your elbow or sleeve. After blowing your nose or coughing into a tissue, properly dispose of the tissue. Then, make sure to wash your hands.
- Don't share food, utensils or beverages with others.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes and keep your hands away from your face because that's how viruses get into your body.
- Stay about six feet away from someone who has a respiratory infection when possible. People can be infectious for seven days from the start of symptoms.
- Get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly, and eat a healthy diet.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

Flu viruses spread easily from person to person through coughing or sneezing. The H1N1 flu virus can become airborne if you cough or sneeze without covering your nose and mouth. The virus spreads through contact with an infected person or by touching an object contaminated with germs from an infected person and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose.

A person infected with H1N1 can infect others from the day before symptoms start to five to seven days after.

Will the seasonal flu shot protect me from the H1N1 pandemic flu?

No. The virus that causes the seasonal flu is different from the H1N1 flu virus. The vaccine against the seasonal flu won't protect against H1N1 and the vaccine for H1N1 won't protect against the seasonal flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strongly advises that you get your seasonal flu vaccination and the H1N1 vaccination when it's available if you're in a priority group. Priority groups include:

- Pregnant women.
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old.
- Emergency medical and healthcare workers.
- People between the ages of 6 months through 24 years.
- People ages 25 through 64 with health problems such as asthma, diabetes, cancer, etc.

What do I do if my child's school closes because of pandemic flu?

Federal officials are recommending schools stay open and focus on infection prevention methods: washing hands, staying home when sick, etc. But a backup plan for child care is wise. Talk to your employer about the sick leave policy and alternate work plans. Can you work from home if you need to care for your child?

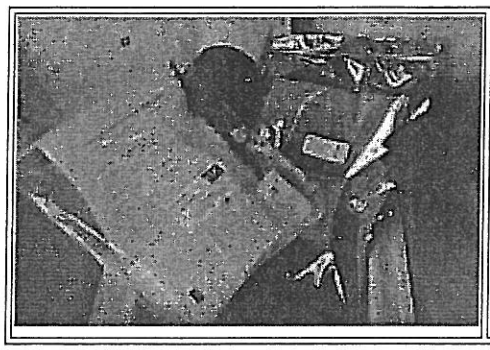
Talk to your neighbors about rotating sick and well child care responsibilities. A household with no illness and a flexible work schedule may care for well children when the school is closed. A parent home with one sick child may care for others in the neighborhood so parents with less flexible work schedules can work. Have plans ready if needed.

The Panhandle Health District provides H1N1 information and updates of the situation in the five northern counties on its website: www.phd1.idaho.gov. PHD's hotline number is (208) 415-5199 or tollfree (866) 528-3501. PHD will announce when the hotline is activated.

H1N1 Influenza

Total H1N1 Cases since May 1, 2009

Area	Date	No. of Cases
5 Northern Counties	9/1/09	11
5 Northern Counties	9/15/09	16



Introducing

A

New Virus

What is H1N1 influenza?

H1N1 is a new flu virus to which most people have no immunity. Originally it was called "swine flu" because testing showed many of the genes in the new virus were similar to flu viruses that normally appear in pigs in North America. Further studies showed that the new virus also has genes from flu viruses that normally infect pigs in Europe and Asia as well as genes from flu viruses that infect birds and people.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

H1N1 symptoms are similar to the symptoms of the seasonal flu that sickens hundreds of thousands of people in the United States each year. H1N1 symptoms are:

- fever
- sore throat
- cough
- runny or stuffy nose
- fatigue
- body aches
- headache
- chills

Some people, particularly children, also have reported nausea, diarrhea and vomiting.

Is H1N1 dangerous to people?

It's still unknown how severe this new virus may be. Experience with this virus so far is limited and influenza is unpredictable. Because Novel H1N1 is a new virus, many people may have little or no immunity against it and there is currently no vaccine to

protect against it.

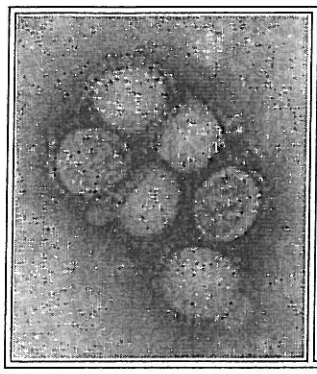
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is studying medical histories of people who were infected with the H1N1 virus to learn if some people may be at greater risk from infection, serious illness or hospitalization.

The CDC reports that 71 percent of the H1N1 infected patients that required hospitalization had underlying medical problems, most commonly asthma or COPD.

Who is at risk of complications from H1N1?

H1N1 has proved the most dangerous to:

- pregnant women
- children and young people to age 24
- people in the 25 to 64 age group with chronic health problems, such as asthma, diabetes and cancer, or weakened immune systems.



How does H1N1 spread?

It is believed that H1N1 spreads through the air, much the same as the seasonal flu. People pass the flu to others through coughing and sneezing. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it, then touching their mouth or nose.

If I have H1N1 infection, how long am I contagious?

The CDC believes H1N1, like seasonal flu, is contagious one day before symptoms appear and for up to seven days after symptoms start.

Is there a way to prevent H1N1 infection?

A vaccine is in the works, but there are common sense actions you can take to help protect yourself and others:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough. Throw the tissue in a waste basket with lid after.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, particularly after you sneeze or cough. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Keep a distance of 3-6 feet.
- If you're sick, stay home for seven days after your symptoms start or until your symptoms have been gone for 24 hours, whichever is longer.

What do I do if I think I have H1N1 flu?

- If your symptoms include fever, sore throat, body aches, runny nose or vomiting or diarrhea, stay home and avoid contact with other people, except for medical care. If you're not in a high-risk group, you are likely to recover at home without medical care.
- If your symptoms are severe or you're at high risk for flu complications, call your health care provider. It's

likely you're contagious, so call first to prevent spreading the virus.

- Seek emergency medical care if you experience any of these signs:
  - difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
  - sudden dizziness
  - confusion
  - severe or persistent vomiting
  - flu-like symptoms that improve but return with fever and a worse cough
  - In children - bluish or gray skin color
  - not drinking enough fluids
  - severe or persistent vomiting
  - not waking up or interacting
  - being so irritable that the child doesn't want to be held
  - fast breathing or trouble breathing
  - flu-like symptoms that improve but return with fever or a worse cough.

Are there medications to treat H1N1 infection?

Yes, antiviral drugs are **prescription medicines** that keep the flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and may prevent serious flu complications.

An H1N1 vaccine is being tested with an October release to the public planned. The following groups need extra protection from the H1N1 virus and may be scheduled for the first doses:

- pregnant women.
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old because children that age are too young for the vaccine.
- healthcare and emergency medical workers.
- people between the ages of 6 months and 24 years and
- people in the 25-64 age group with chronic health problems, such as asthma, diabetes and cancer, or weakened immune systems.

When the vaccine is available, the schedule for the five northern counties will be posted here.

Here are links to important information on H1N1:

Informational materials for schools, doctors' offices, businesses, churches, hospitals, groups:

- Flyer - H1N1 Guidance for Pregnant Women
- Flyer - Frequently Asked Questions
- Flyer - What You Can Do to Protect You and Your Family
- Flyer - Why Your Child Was Sent Home Today
- Flyer - Wash Hands to Stop Germs
- Parent Letter - Let's Work Together to Fight the Flu

In Idaho

- PHD H1N1 Planning Strategies (PowerPoint)
- H1N1 Answer Sheet
- Idaho Case Count by County
- Lab Submission Form

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- FluView
- Influenza H1N1 en Espanol
- Informacion para grupos especificos
- Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home
- Novel H1N1 Flu and Travel
- Facemask and Respirator Use to Reduce H1N1 Transmission

On Planning and Preparing

- Public Health Emergency Preparedness
- Individual and Family Preparedness
- Preparing the Workplace
- How Schools can Prepare
- How Healthcare Providers can Prepare
- Preparing Community Organizations/Churches
- How Prepared Are You? Planning Checklists

Limit the Spread of Germs

That can make you and others sick

Wash Your Hands

With soap and warm water
OR
With alcohol-based hand cleaner

- After you cough, sneeze or use the bathroom.
- Before you touch your eyes, nose and mouth.
- After you touch dirty tissues or dirty surfaces.
- Before you prepare food and before you eat.

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