

Deschutes County Health Services Department

H1N1 Swine Flu Information and Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 4-29-09

What is H1N1 (swine flu)?

H1N1 (swine flu) is an influenza A virus normally found in pigs. It is one of many such viruses that rarely infect humans. The virus currently causing human illness is a new type of swine flu that has developed the ability to infect people and be transmitted from person to person.

How do you get H1N1 (swine flu)?

Although this new virus is called "swine flu," it is not transmitted from pigs to humans, or from eating pork products. Like other respiratory diseases, it is spread from person to person through coughs and sneezes. When people cough or sneeze, they spread germs through the air or on to surfaces that other people may touch.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 (swine flu) in humans?

The symptoms of H1N1 (Swine flu) in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1.

What should I do to keep from getting the H1N1 (swine flu)?

There are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy:

- 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.
- Influenza is primarily thought to spread from person to person when infected people cough or sneeze.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.
- Try not to touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus.

What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

- If you get sick, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. **This includes keeping a child home from school or child care if they have a temperature above 100 degrees or are experiencing other flu like symptoms. If a child must be sent home, arrange child care in the home and not at another school or child care center around other children.**

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care right away.

In children emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and a worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

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

How do I care for someone at home who is sick with flu-like symptoms?

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 others as much as possible.
- Remind them to cover their coughs and clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after coughing and/or sneezing.
- Have everyone in the household clean their hands often, using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Ask your health care provider if people in the household who are around the sick person, particularly those contacts who may have chronic health conditions, should take antiviral medications to prevent the flu.
- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house (for example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom, if that's possible). Keep the sickroom door closed.
- Have the sick person wear a mask if they must be in a common area of the house near other people.
- Maintain good ventilation in shared household areas.

How can human infections with H1N1 swine influenza be diagnosed?

To diagnose swine influenza A infection, a respiratory sample would generally need to be collected within the first four to five days of illness (when an infected person is most likely to be contagious). However, some persons, especially children, may be contagious for 10 days or longer.

Is there a treatment for H1N1 (swine flu)?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent swine flu, but there are medications to help treat it. These medicines are generally used to prevent serious flu complications such as pneumonia and work best if started soon after getting sick (within two days of symptoms). Whether a person with influenza needs to take one of these medicines is a decision that must be made by the patient and his or her health care provider.

How serious is H1N1 (swine flu)?

Like seasonal flu, swine flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. The current outbreak includes confirmed human cases of swine flu in several states across the nation and in other countries. At this point there is not enough information available to determine how severe the illness will become in the United States.

For more information:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov

Oregon Health Division: www.flu.oregon.gov

Oregon Swine Flu Hotline:

1-800-978-3040 Hours: 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday - Friday