



# EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

## Update

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## FAQ's

### Frequently Asked Questions about the 2009 H1N1 Flu

#### General Information

**What is 2009 H1N1 (swine flu)?** 2009 H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” earlier this year) is a new influenza (“FLU”) virus causing illness in people, and was first detected in the U.S. in April 2009.

**Can I get infected with 2009 H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?** No. 2009 H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get infected with novel H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

**Is 2009 H1N1 virus contagious?** Yes, it is contagious and is spreading from human to human. It is also possible for someone to be contagious 24 hours before any symptoms.

**Why should I be vigilant about this virus?** It is a virus new to human beings. It has caused greater disease burden in people younger than 25 years of age than older people. It is important for all ages of people to stay informed about this virus.

**How does 2009 H1N1 virus spread?** 2009 H1N1 virus spreads in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with the flu virus. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something (a surface or object) with flu viruses on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

**How long can influenza virus remain alive on objects (such as on desks, computer keyboards and doorknobs)?** Flu virus can survive on environmental surfaces and infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

**What is the incubation period (the time between infection and appearance of symptoms) for 2009 H1N1 flu?** The incubation period for swine flu can be up to seven days, but it is most likely to be between two and five days.

## **Signs & Symptoms**

**What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?** The chief symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people include **fever (greater than 100 degrees F) AND cough and/or sore throat**. In addition, you may have a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting.

**How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?** People infected with the flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick (before they have symptoms) up to 5 to 7 days after.

**How will I KNOW for sure whether I have the H1N1 flu?** You will not be able to determine from your symptoms alone whether it is H1N1 or seasonal flu. You will however, know that you are ill and need to stay home. You will need to seek medical care if your symptoms are severe, or if you are at higher risk for complications due to pregnancy or other medical conditions.

## **Vaccine**

**What is the best way to prevent this flu?** Get vaccinated!

**Is there a vaccine for this flu?** A 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is currently in production and may be ready this fall.

**Will the 2009 H1N1 vaccine protect me from all the various flu viruses circulating this fall?** No. It will protect you from 2009 H1N1 only. You should also get the seasonal flu vaccination.

**Will the vaccine be available to students?** Yes. Colleges in the district have preordered the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. We hope to obtain the vaccine as soon as it becomes available.

**How much will the 2009 H1N1 vaccine cost?** It will be free to students.

**How will I know when the 2009 H1N1 vaccine is available to me?** You will receive an email from the district offices notifying you when and where you may get vaccinated. Vaccination clinic dates and times will be posted on college and district websites, together with fliers and posters at the various locations.

## **Prevention**

**What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?**

- If you are sick with influenza-like symptoms, the CDC and your college want you stay home (except to get medical care, or for other necessities) for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Keep away from others as much as possible.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket and clean your hands every time you cough or sneeze.

### **If I have a family member at home who is sick with 2009 H1N1 flu, should I go to school?**

People who are well, but have an ill family member at home with the flu, can go to school as usual, but should monitor their health every day. You should take everyday precautions, including washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If you become ill, you should notify your professor and stay home. People with an underlying medical condition, or who are pregnant, should call their health care provider for advice because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness.

### **What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

- Get vaccinated with the seasonal flu vaccine and the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, a thermometer, tissues and other related items might help you avoid making trips out in public while you are sick and contagious

## **I am sick, now what?**

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

- If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people.
- The CDC and college district recommend that you stay home (except to get medical care or for other necessities) for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.
- Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.
- If you have severe illness, or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

**How long will symptoms last?** As with any sort of flu, how bad the symptoms are and how long they last varies depending on treatment and the individual. Most cases reported have been relatively mild, with affected people starting to recover within approximately one week.

### **What are the warning signs that would cause me to seek emergency medical care?**

- 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 then return with fever and a worse cough than before.

**What about my school work if I am ill? How will I make up missed assignments? Will I be academically penalized for being ill?** Priority must be directed towards your health and that of the community. Please email or call your professors and tell them that you need to stay home because you have flu-like symptoms. Faculty have been encouraged to make every effort to accommodate students who are ill as long as it does not compromise the educational quality of the course. Plan ahead and know your professors contact information.

**When may I go back to school?** You may go back to school after you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours. Your fever should be gone without the need of Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or Tylenol (fever reducing medicines).