



Novel H1N1 and You

Mark Valacak

Community Health Division Director

Public Information Officer

Genesee County Health Department

What is novel H1N1?

- Novel H1N1 is a new strain of influenza.
- It was first detected in April 2009.
- It is now spreading person-to-person worldwide.
- The virus spreads the same way that regular seasonal influenza virus spreads.



Why is novel H1N1 virus sometimes called “swine flu”?

- At first, testing showed this new virus was very similar to flu viruses that infect pigs (swine) in North America.
- More testing has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally infects North American pigs.
- The novel H1N1 virus has genes from influenza viruses that infect pigs, birds and humans.



How does novel H1N1 virus spread?

- Novel H1N1 virus spreads from person to person in the same way that the seasonal flu spreads.
- Flu viruses are spread mainly through coughing or sneezing by people sick with the flu.
- The flu virus may also be spread when a person touches an item contaminated with respiratory droplets, and then touching his/her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing his/her hands.
- The majority of people being infected are children and young adults.



How does the novel H1N1 virus NOT spread?

- Novel H1N1 viruses are not spread by food.
- You cannot get infected with novel H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products.



What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

- Symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are the same as those of seasonal flu virus.
- The most common symptoms include:
 - Fever
 - Upper respiratory symptoms including cough, sore throat, and runny or stuffy nose
 - Body aches
 - Headache
 - Chills
 - Fatigue
 - Vomiting and diarrhea



How severe is illness associated with novel H1N1 flu virus?

- Most people who have become ill with this new virus have recovered without complications.
- Just like the seasonal flu some people can suffer severe complications, especially those with previous medical conditions.



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

- People with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu 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 like children and people with weakened immune systems.
- People stop spreading the virus about 24 hours after their fever is gone.



What should I do if I get sick and think it's novel H1N1?

- If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms you should stay home and avoid contact with other people for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities.
- If you have a severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.



What are severe illness warning signs?

- In children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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 worse cough



What are severe illness warning signs?

- In adults:
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
 - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
 - Sudden dizziness
 - Confusion
 - Severe or persistent vomiting
 - Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough



Should I get tested for novel H1N1?

- Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.
- You do not need to be tested if you have a mild case of influenza like symptoms.
- Testing may be done in certain situations:
 - people who have severe complications or die from influenza like illness
 - outbreak of influenza-like illness in a community setting such as a school.



Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?

- Yes, antivirals can be used to treat and/or prevent infection with novel H1N1 flu virus.
- Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines.
- Most people do not need to use antiviral drugs and will recover fine without using them.
- The CDC recommends that only people who are sick and have a condition that places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications use antivirals.



What can I do to protect myself and others from getting sick?

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- 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 with soap and water after sneezing or coughing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.



What can I do to protect myself and others from getting sick?

- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay at home if you are sick.
- Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.



What should I do if I have been around someone who is sick with the flu?

- If you are well but have an ill family member at home with novel H1N1 flu, you can go to work or school as usual.
- Monitor your health every day.
- Take everyday precautions including washing your hands often with soap and water.
- If you become ill, stay home.
- If you have an underlying medical condition or are pregnant call your health care provider for advice, you may need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness.



What about the face masks?

- In community and home settings, the use of facemasks and respirators to prevent infection with the flu is generally not recommended.
- Facemasks can be considered for persons at increased risk of severe illness from influenza.
- Persons sick with influenza like illness are recommended to wear a facemask when around others to reduce the spread of his/her illness.



What household cleaning should be done to prevent the spread of influenza virus?

- Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 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.



Influenza Vaccine

- There are two types of influenza (flu) vaccine to be aware of this year.
 1. The seasonal flu that happens every fall and winter and the seasonal influenza vaccine is currently available.
 2. The novel H1N1 flu that began circulating last spring and the vaccine is anticipated to be available mid-October.



Seasonal Flu Vaccine

- Seasonal influenza vaccine is currently available in some locations and will be widely available soon.
- It will become more and more available in the coming weeks.
- The CDC recommends that the public gets vaccinated against seasonal influenza now.
- It is made up of 3 strains of flu virus.
 - It will not protect you against novel H1N1 flu.
 - It will offer protection against seasonal flu that will also be circulating this flu season.



Vaccination is important to prevent infection

- Vaccination with the seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for:
 - Children
 - Persons aged 50 years and older,
 - Healthcare personnel,
 - Close contacts of immuno-compromised persons,
 - Pregnant women,
 - Breastfeeding mothers,
 - Travelers, and
 - The general population



Novel H1N1 Vaccine

- Novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and should be ready for the public in the fall.
- It will likely be a 2 dose series over 3 to 4 weeks.
- Available in mid-October.
- Check with your provider and pharmacy if they will be giving the shot.
- Novel H1N1 vaccine will also be available at the Genesee County Health Department.



Who gets the vaccine?

- The new vaccine may be in limited supply for a short amount of time until the larger shipments reach the public.
- CDC has determined priority groups that need the vaccine due to:
 - How easy it is to catch the flu
 - Health conditions
 - Being in direct contact with sick individuals
 - High risk Complications from the flu
 - Living in community dwellings (dorms)



Who gets the vaccine?

- CDC Target Groups are:
 - 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.



Who gets the vaccine?

- If the novel H1N1 vaccine is limited the CDC also made recommendations regarding which people within the groups listed above should be prioritized these include:
 - Pregnant women.
 - People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age.
 - Health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact.
 - Children 6 months through 4 years of age and
 - Children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions.



Who gets the vaccine?

- Once the demand from priority groups has been met, vaccinations will begin for everyone from the ages of 25 through 64 years.
- Once vaccine demand among younger age groups has been met, vaccination will be available to people 65 or older.



Will school be closed?

- A high number of cases of H1N1 influenza have been among school aged children.
- Schools will likely act as points of spread for the flu viruses.
- The CDC is not recommending school closures if the flu continues to cause disease.
- Schools may be closed due to high levels of absenteeism.



What should parents do about novel H1N1 flu?

- Do not send children to school or childcare if they are sick.
 - It is also important that they not expose others unnecessarily.
 - Sick children should be kept home for at least 24 hours after they are free of fever.
- Parents should teach their children how to reduce the risk of getting and spreading flu viruses including washing hands and coughing or sneezing into their sleeve.



What should parents do about novel H1N1 flu?

- Families should plan ahead now to decide who would take care of your children if they were sick or their school was closed.
- Parents who work should ensure that their employers have a plan to accommodate employee absenteeism due to the flu.



What are the most important things I should know about novel H1N1?

- Novel H1N1 flu is similar to the seasonal flu.
 - The symptoms are the same and most people recover without complications.
 - It has spread quickly across the world because it is a new strain of the flu and the population is not immune to it.
 - Just like the seasonal flu some people suffer more severe complications.
- Novel H1N1 flu is preventable.
 - A vaccine will be available.
 - In the meantime:
 - Get the seasonal flu vaccine.
 - Practice routine flu prevention methods such as washing your hands often with soap and water and practicing good cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Having a plan will help.
 - Be prepared to keep children home if they are sick or their school is closed.
 - Be prepared to stay at home if you are ill.



Questions?

- More information can be found at:
 - <http://www.gchd.us/HotTopics/H1N1Flu.asp>
 - or by calling the GCHD Novel H1N1 Influenza hotline at **(810) 257-3887**

