

H1N1 VIRUS

What is Swine Flu - H1N1 Virus ?

Swine flu, now called H1N1 influenza A, is a type of flu virus. The virus is thought to have originated from Mexico, but has since spread globally. Although it was previously known as swine flu, it is not contracted from pigs or by eating pork. It was renamed H1N1 influenza A to avoid people making a connection to pigs. It is a human influenza virus and is being spread by people. It is thought to be a combination of three different flu viruses - swine flu, bird flu and human flu. The new strain is extremely contagious and is quickly spreading across the globe.

Swine Flu H1N1 Symptoms

It is very important to recognize the signs and symptoms of swine flu in the early stage. Generally the symptoms of H1N1 are similar to those of the common winter influenza. The symptoms of this flu begin 1-4 days after being exposed to a contagious person. Sudden chills and fever are generally the first symptoms. Temperatures usually remain between 100F and 104F for many days. Signs of a more serious swine flu infection might include pneumonia and respiratory failure. Other signs and symptoms can include:

- Shortness of breath (dyspnea)
- Dry cough, runny nose or stuffy nose, scratchy throat and head congestion
- Chills
- Body aches (myalgia)
- Headache

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ACTION STEPS TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS AND EMPLOYEES HEALTHY

Regardless of the size or type of your business, planning and taking action *now* can help protect your business and employees from the flu.

Plan Now

- **Review your current pandemic flu plan or develop a new plan.** Involve your employees in development and review of the plan. Share the plan and policies with your employees.
- **Engage your state and local health department** to confirm channels of communication and methods for dissemination of local outbreak information.
- **Consider ways to allow sick employees to stay home** without fear of losing their jobs.
- **Develop flexible leave policies** to allow employees to stay home to care for sick family members or for children, if schools dismiss students or childcare programs close.
- **Share best practices with other businesses in your community.** Work with companies in your supply chain as well as chambers of commerce and local associations to improve response efforts.

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- **Add a “widget” or “button” to your company** Web page or employee Web site so employees can access the latest information on the flu:
 - **Purchase supplies** such as tissues, soap, and alcohol-based hand cleaners to encourage healthful habits in the workplace.
 - **Plan for how business can continue if many employees must stay home.** Designate and train other employees in the event someone becomes sick to make sure you can continue your critical functions.
- Take Steps Now**
Take steps now and continue during the flu season to help protect the health of your employees.
- **Advise all employees to stay home if they are sick** until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). Make sure fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
 - **Employees who get sick at work should go home as soon as possible.** If the employee cannot go home immediately, he or she should be separated from other employees.
 - **Encourage sick employees at higher risk of complications from flu to contact their health care provider as soon as possible.** Taking antiviral medicines early might prevent severe complications from the flu, such as hospitalization or death.
 - **Encourage all employees who want protection from flu to get vaccinated for seasonal flu.** Also encourage employees who are at higher risk for complications from 2009 H1N1 flu to receive the vaccine when it becomes available. People at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 flu complications include pregnant women and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes). For more information about priority groups for vaccination, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm.
 - **Provide resources and a work environment that promotes hand washing and**

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COLD, FLU OR ALLERGY?

The symptoms are similar but if it came on hard and fast it's most likely the flu

by Kathy Quan, RN BSN

Helping your physician or health care practitioner diagnose whether or not you have influenza (aka the flu) can affect how long you'll be sick.

That's because the prescription medications (i.e. Tamiflu and Relenza) to help reduce the duration of the flu have to be started within 2 days of your first symptom to be effective.

Similar Symptoms

Colds, allergies and the flu can all have very similar symptoms such as a runny nose, cough, sore throat and some congestion. The onset and duration are key to diagnosing the flu virus. According to popular belief, if the discharge from your nose or throat is green, you have an infection. This is not actually an accurate diagnostic tool. This discharge can be clear, yellow or even green and not be anything more than allergies or a cold.

Flu Hits Hard and Fast

The flu will come on very suddenly and quickly. It hits hard and fast! A cold can be slow to evolve and run a course of up to two weeks. Allergies can mimic a cold, but they can last a lot longer, particularly if the allergen is not removed. Allergy symptoms don't progress (e.g. from a scratchy throat to a full blown sore throat.)

One Symptom Will Stand Out

Usually one sign or symptom stands out and will differentiate the ailment. Itchy, watery eyes usually mean allergy. If you have facial pain or your upper teeth hurt, it's usually a sinus infection and you need to see your practitioner. A sinus infection, unlike colds, allergies or the flu, will need antibiotics. A sinus infection can result from a cold or a prolonged battle with nasal allergies. A sore throat from a cold can develop into an earache or strep throat which requires antibiotics.

Oh No It's the Flu!

If your symptoms come on suddenly and quickly worsen, you probably have the flu. Flu can start with a scratchy throat that quickly develops into a sore throat and/or hacking cough. Intense muscle aches and pains are usually the biggest clue that it's the flu. If you feel like you've been run over by a truck, call your doctor. You will most likely also have a fever and a throbbing headache. The symptoms usually dissipate in ten days to two weeks, but you can continue to have a bothersome hacking cough and feel fatigued for weeks. The flu virus medications if started in the first 2-3 days, will help to reduce the duration of your symptoms, but they are not a cure.

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Dangerous for Some

The flu can be very dangerous especially to the very young, the elderly and anyone with a chronic illness. Health care workers are also at high risk due to repeated exposure. There is no cure for the flu. A flu shot is recommended to help prevent the flu. Contact your health care provider if symptoms worsen especially an elevated temperature. Complications from the flu include bronchitis and pneumonia.

Preventative Measures

Other preventative measures include frequent hand washing, avoiding crowds, healthy eating habits, getting plenty of rest and drinking fluids. If someone is coughing or sneezing near you remind them to cover their nose or mouth and to wash their hands.

Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, hair. Wash your hands frequently especially after using a tissue, coughing or sneezing, and using the bathroom. Keep surfaces in your home clean such as counters, hand rails, doorknobs, telephones, computer keyboards and mice to reduce spreading of germs. Don't shake hands with someone if you are they are cough-

ing or sneezing. Politely say you're happy to meet or see them, but you don't want to spread your germs. Allergies can be helped by keeping surfaces clean especially in bathrooms and kitchens. Scrub and remove mold and mildew. Encase bedding in allergy-proof covers. Remove or avoid offending plants and animals as possible.

Here's a list of signs or symptoms you're most likely to have with colds, allergies or flu:

INFLUENZA (FLU)

- headache- mild to intense
- muscle aches and pains- moderate to intense
- fever- can range from 102 to 104 degrees F for 3-4 days
- fatigue - moderate to severe (*can continue for several weeks*)
- sore throat - can be severe
- cough- dry, hacking; can be severe

COLD

- fever- sometimes slight elevation
- headache-mild
- muscle aches- mild
- stuffy nose

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ACTION STEPS TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS AND EMPLOYEES HEALTHY

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covering coughs and sneezes. Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, and alcohol-based hand cleaner. Offer education on hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes in an easy-to-understand format and in appropriate languages. Go to www.flu.gov/plan/workplaceplanning/toolkit.html to find tools businesses can use.

- **Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact** with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.
- **Provide information to employees overseas** about what to do if they become sick.

Take Additional Steps if Flu Conditions are More Severe

The flu may become more severe and additional steps may be necessary to slow the spread of flu and maintain a healthy workforce.

- **Conduct active screening of employees when they arrive at work.** Ask all employees about symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, muscle aches, and sore throat during the previous 24 hours. Employees who have flu-like symptoms should be asked

to go home. Continue to advise employees to check for any signs of illness before coming to work each day.

- **Extend the time sick employees stay home to at least 7 days.** People who are still sick after 7 days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away, even if they feel better sooner.
- **Try to change work duties, workspace, or work schedules for employees who are at higher risk for flu complications** to reduce the possibility of getting sick at work. If this cannot be done, allow these employees to work from home, or stay home if feasible.
- **Plan to minimize face-to-face contact between employees.** Consider strategies, such as using e-mail, Web sites, and teleconferences, canceling large meetings and gatherings, and encouraging flexible work arrangements (telecommuting or flexible work hours) to reduce the number of employees who must be at the work site at the same time or in one specific location.
- **Provide guidance to employees who are traveling overseas on what to do if they become sick.** Also provide information about possible travel delays, health screenings, and other activities targeted towards travelers. ••

www.doh.state.fl.us/chdCitrus/Forms/BusinessandEmployeesHealthy.pdf

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**CAC Human
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(800) 399-5331

Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

This hotline is free to all CAC members and is staffed with HR professionals from the California Employers Association (CEA). CEA provides CAC members with safety consultant information, safety advice, Cal-OSHA updates, on-site safety training as well as access to a safety training video lending program.

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- Fatigue or tiredness
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

Emergency Warning Symptoms in Children:

- Trouble breathing or fast breathing
- Gray or bluish skin color
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Fever with a rash
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Not drinking enough fluids or liquid
- Irritability
- Symptoms of flu improve but then return with worse cough and fever

Emergency Warning Symptoms in Adults:

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

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COLD, FLU OR ALLERGY?

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- nasal discharge - can be clear to green
- sneezing- often
- sore throat- mild to moderate cough- mild to moderate

ALLERGY

- headache- mild to moderate
- stuffy nose
- nasal discharge- usually clear but can be yellow or green
- sneezing- often and usually itching or tickling in the nose
- sore throat- from post nasal drip (usually no real redness)
- cough- often and from a tickle in the throat
- irritated eyes- itchy and watery

OTC Meds

Over the counter medications can be useful in reducing the severity and sometimes duration of symptoms with colds, flu and allergies. Read labels carefully and ask your health care practitioner to recommend OTC meds especially if you have chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure.

Seek Professional Advice

Always seek the advice of your health care practitioner if you become ill. Providing a list of symptoms, their severity and onset will be helpful in diagnosing the ailment. Don't try to diagnose yourself even if you have a medical degree! ••

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