

Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu)

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What is H1N1 (Swine Flu or Novel H1N1)?

Novel H1N1 (aka "swine flu" or H1N1) is a new influenza virus that was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is still learning about the severity of the virus. At this time, there is not enough information to predict how severe the outbreak will be in terms of illness and death or how it will compare with seasonal influenza.

Contagion

CDC has determined that the H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

Like the seasonal flu, certain people may be at higher risk of severe illness, including persons with certain chronic medical conditions, persons ages 65 or older, children younger than 5 years old, and pregnant women.

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu shed virus and 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, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus. If you are in a high-risk group for complications from influenza, attempt to avoid close contact (within six feet) with others who are sick with influenza-like symptoms.

The overall risk of contracting a disease from an ill person onboard an airplane is similar to that in other confined areas with high occupant density, such as a bus, a subway, or movie theatre for a similar time of exposure; anywhere where a person is in close contact with others. The majority of modern, large, commercial aircrafts, which use a recirculation type of cabin air system, utilize HEPA filters. A small number of older aircraft types have filters with lower efficiencies.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is not recommending travel restrictions.

Symptoms

- Similar to the symptoms of the seasonal flu, which can include:
 - fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue
 - many people also have reported diarrhea and vomiting

Also, like the seasonal flu, severe illnesses and death have occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

Spread of the Virus

- It is thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads:
 - Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza.
 - Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Before Your Trip

- CDC recommends that travelers at high risk for complications from any form of flu (e.g., immunosuppression or chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders, etc.) discuss their travel plans with their doctor. Together, they should look carefully at the situation in their destination and the available health care options in the area. They should discuss the specific health condition and possible increased risk of traveling to the area affected by H1N1 flu with their health practitioners.
- If you are traveling to an area where cases of H1N1 flu are being reported, the following recommendations will help you: 1) reduce your risk of infection (e.g., wash your hands often, stay away from sick people, etc.) and 2) stay healthy (e.g., get plenty of rest, eat balanced meals, drink water, etc.).
- EAP **strongly** encourages you to purchase trip cancelation/interruption insurance coverage. Most of these policies cover cancelations due to weather, sudden illness or death, jury duty, and bankruptcy of airline before departure.

Prepare for Your Trip

- Stay informed. Check updates on the CDC and UOEAP websites.
- Be sure you are up-to-date on [routine vaccinations](#), including the seasonal influenza vaccine, when available.
- Find out about other health risks and travel recommendations for your destination.
- Pack a [travel health kit](#) with basic first aid and medical supplies.
- Identify health care resources in the area(s) you will be visiting.
- Read the [EAP Sickness and Accident insurance plan](#).
- Purchase trip cancelation/interruption insurance coverage.

Check Your Own Health

- Do not travel if you are sick.
- If you have flu-like symptoms seven days before departure, contact your doctor. Check with your health care provider about any special care you might need, particularly if you have a chronic health condition. After seeing your doctor, contact the UOEAP Operations Specialist for your program if you will not arrive on time for the program. Stay home and avoid travel until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]) or signs of a fever decrease without the use of fever-reducing medications. When the self-isolation period ends, continue to practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene and avoid close contact with people you know to be at increased risk of influenza-related complications.

Upon Arrival

- Health authorities around the world are monitoring the situation as cases have been identified in many countries.
- The United States has the highest number of H1N1 confirmed and probable cases in the world, so flights from the United States arriving in other countries may be specifically targeted for screening. You may be checked for fever and other symptoms of H1N1 flu, and your travel may

be delayed. If you are picked up by a temperature scanning machine as displaying symptoms, do not be alarmed if you are quarantined until tests are carried out. For more information about possible H1N1 flu screening for international travelers, refer to the [CDC website](#).

- Some countries are using thermal scanners to monitor the temperature of all incoming passengers. If you have a fever or respiratory symptoms, have been sitting in the plane next to someone with flu-like symptoms, or are suspected of having H1N1 flu based on a screening, you may be asked to:
 - Be isolated from other people until you are well
 - Have a medical examination
 - Take a rapid flu test (which consists of a nasal swab sample)
 - Be hospitalized and given medical treatment, if you test positive for novel H1N1 flu
- If you experience symptoms following travel or 7 days after arrival, call the Study Center Director/staff or Liaison Officer immediately, seek medical attention if you have pre-existing chronic health condition and/or your condition suddenly gets much worse, and limit your contact with other people as much as possible. **Wear a facemask (N95 respirator preferred) when sharing common spaces with other people to help prevent spreading the virus to others.**
- **Follow local guidelines**
 - Pay attention to announcements from the local government, follow their instructions, and stay current with the local health and security situation.
 - If you are sick, you may be asked to wear a surgical mask to protect others or to stay in your home or a quarantine hotel to prevent the spread of the virus.
 - Follow any movement restrictions and prevention recommendations.

Prevention and Treatment

The best way to protect yourself is by following good hygiene practices:

- Currently, there is no [vaccine](#) available to protect against the H1N1 virus.
- There are simple, everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

Take These Everyday, Logical, Steps to Protect Your Health

1. Carry tissues with you at all times and cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
 - *Dispose of the tissue in the trash immediately after you use it.*
2. Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of a cold or flu virus
 - CDC recommends washing your hands, with soap and warm water, for 15-20 seconds each time.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
4. In the absence of soap and water, alcohol-based hand sanitizers (containing at least 60 percent alcohol) are also effective.
 - If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel does not need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands. Avoid close contact with sick people.

5. **Stay home if you are sick for at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C]), or signs of a fever decrease without the use of fever-reducing medications.** When the self-isolation period ends, you should continue to practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene and avoid close contact with people you know to be at increased risk of influenza-related complications.
6. **Antiviral medications** can sometimes help lessen influenza symptoms, but require a prescription. Most people do not need these antiviral drugs to fully recover from the flu. However, persons at higher risk for severe flu complications, or those with severe flu illness who require hospitalization, might benefit from antiviral medications. Ask a health care provider whether you need antiviral medication.

Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice and avoid crowds.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so (if you have a fever, it can last two to four days); a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues, and other related items will be useful and will prevent making trips out in public while you are sick and contagious. In addition, an adequate supply of nutrition (healthy food, fluids, and water) should be easily accessible to you. If you must leave the home (for example, for medical care), wear a facemask/respirator and cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

For More Information:

- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [CDC Recommendations for Facemask and Respirator Use](#)
- [International Air Travel Association](#)
- [Frequently asked questions about swine influenza and air travel. May 11, 2009 \[Full text\]](#)
- [University of California, Education Abroad Program](#)
- [U.S. Department of State \(DOS\)](#)
- [iJET International Intelligent Risk Systems Pandemic Influenza Advice Sheet - July 2009](#)

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