

What You Should Know about Swine Flu—H1N1 Influenza

What is swine flu?

H1N1, also known as swine flu, is an influenza virus that was first detected in the United States in April 2009. It is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, in much the same way that any seasonal influenza virus spreads.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

The symptoms of the swine flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Also, like seasonal flu, severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with the swine flu.

How is swine flu spread?

The virus is spread through coughing, sneezing, or by touching an object with the flu virus on it and then touching one's mouth, nose, or eyes.

How can I protect myself against swine flu?

- Clean hands thoroughly with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching your mouth and nose as much as possible;
- Avoid close contact with people who might be ill;
- Reduce the time spent in crowded settings, if possible; and
- Practice good health habits such as adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, and staying physically active.
- If you are in a higher risk category, opt to get the vaccine (see below)

What do I do if I become ill?

- Contact your doctor to discuss whether a medical exam is necessary.
- Stay home! Limit contact with other people.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, and dispose of all used tissues. If tissues are not available, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow/arm.

Should I get the swine flu vaccine?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently announced the approval of four vaccines against the H1N1 virus. Consult with your physician to determine if you are a good candidate for the swine flu vaccine.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control suggest that the following groups consider the vaccine: pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

For more information contact:

www.mass.gov/flu

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

www.pandemicflu.gov

