



Flu Facts



What should I know about the flu?

What sort of flu season (October 2009 to April 2010)

Is expected this year?

Public Health officials are preparing the nation for what promises to be a challenging double whammy of a flu season with two types of flu in circulation — the novel H1N1, or so-called swine flu, and the usual seasonal influenza — each entailing its own vaccine, targeted at different sets of high-risk groups.

What is influenza (also called flu)?

The flu is a respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that can be passed from person to person. It can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Some people, such as older people, young children, pregnant women and those with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at increased risk for serious complications, including death, from influenza illness.

What is novel H1N1?

The novel or 2009 pandemic H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first identified in people in the United States in April 2009. Since then, this virus has been spreading from person-to-person worldwide in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. Because H1N1 infections are occurring in many countries at the same time, it has been deemed as the 2009 pandemic influenza.

Why is H1N1 different from the seasonal flu?

Unlike seasonal flu, H1N1 has caused severe illness in the young and old, healthy and the chronically ill — all at an unusual time of the year.

What are some of the early symptoms?

The most common flu symptoms are the following:

- Fever (usually high)
- Cough
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common with children)
- Sore throat
- Body Aches
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

How does the flu spread?

Influenza viruses mainly spread from person to person by way of respiratory droplets containing the virus propelled from uncovered coughs or sneezes. (This is called “droplet spread.”) The droplets can land on the mouth or nose of people nearby or onto nearby surfaces touched by people who then touch their nose or mouth.

Those in close contact with infected people are at higher risk of exposure to the infection. Close contact is defined as having cared for or lived with a person who has the flu or having been in a setting where

there was a high likelihood of contact with respiratory droplets and/or body fluids of such a person. Close contact typically does not include activities such as walking by an infected person or sitting across from a symptomatic patient in a waiting room or office.

When is a flu sufferer contagious?

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming symptomatic. Children may pass the virus for longer than seven days. Symptoms start one to four days after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

When to seek urgent care?

The symptoms of the 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of the seasonal flu. If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

Emergency Warning Signs

CHILDREN	ADULTS
Fast breathing or trouble breathing	Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
Bluish or gray skin color	Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
Not drinking enough fluids	Sudden dizziness
Severe or persistent vomiting	Severe or persistent vomiting
Not waking up or not interacting	Confusion
Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held	Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough	



When are Masks and/or Gloves Necessary?

Healthcare Settings – An N-95 respirator (properly fitted and tested), preferably, or surgical or procedure mask and gloves should be worn by healthcare personnel providing direct care in close contact (i.e., within three feet) with patients who have symptoms of a respiratory illness, particularly if fever is present.

Non-Healthcare Settings - The use of surgical or procedure masks are recommended for those who are ill and must be around others. This is one way to prevent coughing or sneezing infected droplets onto others or surfaces. Emphasis should be on properly covering coughs/sneezes and frequent hand washing at home, school, work, and other public settings. Gloves are not necessarily recommended in these settings.



What can I do to prevent the flu?

Clean your hands frequently: the right way!

- Keeping hands clean is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infection and illness.
- Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.
- Rub hands vigorously together to make lather and scrub all surfaces. It is the soap combined with the scrubbing action that helps dislodge and remove germs.
- Continue rubbing hands for 20 seconds. Need a timer? Imagine singing your ABC's twice through!
- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet and, in public restrooms, to open the bathroom when leaving.



If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean hands. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends a concentration of 60% to 95% ethanol or isopropanol, the concentration range of greatest germicidal efficacy.

- Apply product to the palm of one hand.
- Rub the product over all surfaces of hands and fingers until hands are dry.

Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Immediately put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- Then, wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.



Get vaccinated

- On average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications every year in the United States, while about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes.
- Flu vaccines help your body prepare to fight this often serious and potentially deadly virus.
- Vaccines may prevent the flu virus in the person who receives them, and protects those who come into contact with unvaccinated individuals.

Stay home when ill

- Keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick.
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care. The recommendation is longer for those working in a healthcare settings or who are in close contact with people at high risk of flu complications.

Why it is important to take these preventive measures

- Serious illnesses like influenza are spread by not taking preventive measures.
- Practicing all of the healthy habits together can protect everyone from spreading germs that make you and others sick.
- Remind your family and friends to practice health habits. Spread the word, not the germs!

What resources are available?

Where can I get an H1N1 flu shot?

Healthcare providers, pharmacies, health plans, college/university health centers, employee/occupational health and local public health departments across the Bay Area are ordering H1N1 flu shots. H1N1 shots should be available from the sources listed above in mid- to late-October. First check with your healthcare provider or local pharmacies to see if they have received the vaccine.

The Alameda County Public Health Department will announce when it will be offering H1N1 flu shots at community-based and transit-friendly locations throughout the County on Saturdays.

Where can I get a seasonal flu shot?

American Lung Association

The American Lung Association has a website designed to provide you locations in your local area. Click on the hyperlink to access this website. <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/>