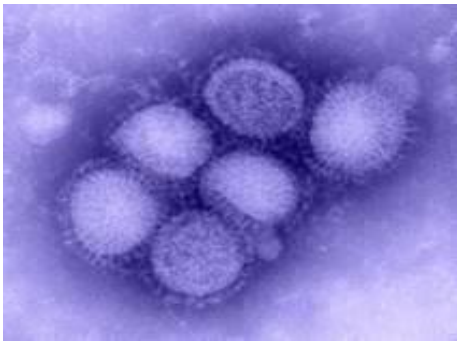


H1N1 INFLUENZA

It has been several months since the discovery of the H1N1 Influenza Virus (previously known as “Swine Flu”). This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that a pandemic of H1N1 flu was underway.



Since the WHO declaration of a pandemic, the new H1N1 virus has continued to spread, with the number of countries reporting cases of H1N1 nearly doubling. The United States continues to report the largest number of H1N1 cases of any country worldwide.

Given ongoing H1N1 activity to date, CDC anticipates that there will be more cases, more hospitalizations and more deaths associated with this pandemic in the United States over the summer and into the fall and winter. The new H1N1 virus, in conjunction with regular seasonal influenza viruses, poses the potential to cause significant illness with associated hospitalizations and deaths during the U.S. influenza season.

SYMPTOMS

Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

H1N1 infection has been reported to cause a wide range of flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. In addition, many people also have reported nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea.

ANTIVIRALS

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. During the current pandemic, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs is to treat severe influenza illness (such as hospitalized patients).

VACCINATIONS

CDC hopes that people will start to go out and get vaccinated against seasonal influenza as soon as vaccines become available at their doctor's offices and in their communities. **The seasonal flu vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against the new H1N1 influenza.** However a H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be ready for the public in the fall (Late October).

The new H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine – it is intended to be used along-side seasonal flu vaccine. H1N1 vaccine can be given at the

same time the seasonal flu vaccine is given, however **the CDC is recommending people to receive the seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available.**

Because the new H1N1 vaccine is still in production, there is a concern that not enough vaccine will be readily available immediately for the population. Because of this a guide has been published recognizing the priority groups to receive the initial vaccine.

HIGH RISK GROUPS

The groups recommended to receive the new H1N1 influenza vaccine include (all high risk groups are at equal risk):

- 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.

LOW RISK GROUP

- **Adults over the age of 64 years** H1N1 appears different from seasonal influenza in that adults older than 64 years do not appear to be at increased risk of H1N1-related complications thus far.

BE PREPARED

There are additional precautions that should be taken to avoid becoming ill with influenza. **Take these everyday steps to protect your health:**

- **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** often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- Try to **avoid close contact** with sick people.

If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick. People infected with seasonal and new H1N1 flu shed the virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after.

Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues and other related items might be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public.

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with new H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing

their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, for example, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person may also move through the air. Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being placed on the surface. To prevent the spread of influenza virus it is important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

For more information, the following resources are available:

Center for Disease Control (CDC) :
www.cdc.gov

World Health Organization (WHO):
www.who.int

U.S. Government Flu Home Page:
www.pandemicflu.gov

Updated September 16, 2009

Reference: www.cdc.gov

THE LATEST INFORMATION ON H1N1 INFLUENZA

What it is..

What to do...

How to prevent it...



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