



What to do if you have the flu?.....1



What is the flu?.....2



What you should know about H1N1?.....2



How To Protect Yourself.....2



Contamination & Cleaning.....3

August - September 2009

Wellness *focus*

Influenza & H1N1... What You Need To Know



What is the flu?

It is a contagious disease caused by a virus that spreads from one person to another. The spreading could be caused from hand-to-hand contact or from the spray from coughs and sneezes.

The virus enters the upper part of the respiratory tract through the mouth or nose. Symptoms appear after an incubation period of 1 to 4 days. Influenza usually occurs in winter or early spring.

Influenza symptoms

Early symptoms of the flu can include chills, fever, sneezing, headache, muscle pain and a sore throat. These are usually followed by a dry, hacking cough and, often, chest pains. The fever generally lasts for 3 to 5 days but leaves you feeling weak. If there are no complications, you should recover within 1 or 2 weeks although you may feel weak for a few weeks to come.

Dangers of influenza

Sometimes flu symptoms are confined mainly to the upper respiratory tract, but if you have a bacterial infection complicating the flu, it could spread from the upper respiratory tract down into the lungs and cause bronchitis or pneumonia. This usually occurs in very young children, elderly folk or those with diabetes, chronic chest disorders and chronic heart disease.

Vaccinations and Immunizations

It is possible, and in many cases recommended to get vaccinated against influenza with a flu vaccine. However, due to the high mutability of the virus, a particular flu vaccine formulation usually only works for about a year. The World Health Organization coordinates the contents of the vaccine each year to contain the most likely strains of the virus which probably will attack the next year. The flu vaccine is usually recommended for anyone in a high-risk group who would be likely to suffer complications from influenza. Flu vaccine is available as a nasal spray vaccine (recommended for all healthy people ages 5 to 49) and as an injectable vaccine.

Source: <http://www.xodigo.com/h5n1/flu.htm> -- Article from the public domain CDC publication www.cdc.gov/ World Health Organization Fact Sheet Overview of influenza.



What to do if you have the flu?

If you seem to be the only person in your area with the flu-like symptoms, you may have a different viral disease. Influenza spreads quickly and others will have it too. Here is some advice:

- Go to bed.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- If your fever persists more than 3 or 4 days or if you have difficulty breathing while resting, call your physician.
- If you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth with a tissue.
- Do not shake hands with anyone and frequently wash your hands. When you sneeze or cough, the virus "cloud" can last for hours on our hand and even in the air.

Source:
<http://www.xodigo.com/h5n1/flu.htm>
Article from the public domain CDC publication www.cdc.gov/ World Health Organization Fact Sheet Overview of influenza.

What you should know about H1N1?

What is H1N1 (Swine Flu)? H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. 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.

Why is H1N1 virus sometimes called “swine flu”? This virus was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. However, further studies have shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia, bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a “quadruple reassortant” virus.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people? The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus in people 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. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.



Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm>

Prevention & Treatment

How To Protect Yourself



What can I do to protect myself from getting sick? There is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus. However, a novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be ready for the public in the fall. As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against seasonal influenza. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like 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.

Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- 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 that could be useful.
- What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?
- 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. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm>

Contamination & Cleaning

How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface.

What kills influenza virus?

Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemical germicides, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics), and alcohols are effective against human influenza viruses if used in proper concentration for a sufficient length of time. For example, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used to clean hands. The gels should be rubbed into hands until they are dry.

What if soap and water are not available and alcohol-based products are not allowed in my facility?

Though the scientific evidence is not as extensive as that on hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizers, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful for killing flu germs on hands.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk, and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How should waste disposal be handled to prevent the spread of influenza virus?

To prevent the spread of influenza virus, it is recommended that tissues and other disposable items used by an infected person be thrown in the trash. Additionally, persons should wash their hands with soap and water after touching used tissues and similar waste.

What household cleaning should be done to prevent the spread of influenza virus?

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.

How should linens, eating utensils and dishes of persons infected with influenza virus be handled?

Linens, eating utensils, and dishes belonging to those who are sick do not need to be cleaned separately, but it is important that these items not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Linens (such as bed sheets and towels) should be washed by using household laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. Individuals should avoid "hugging" laundry prior to washing it to prevent contaminating themselves. Individuals should wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub immediately after handling dirty laundry.

Eating utensils should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap.



What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with [alcohol-based hand cleaner](#). CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm>

