



Novel H1N1 Influenza: What Connecticut Residents Need To Know

www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch

What is novel H1N1 influenza? Novel H1N1 influenza, or swine flu, is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. The virus can spread from people who have it to other people through coughs and sneezes. Most of the cases in the United States to date have been mild.

What are the symptoms of novel H1N1 influenza? Novel H1N1 influenza symptoms appear to be like the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, lethargy, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting with novel H1N1 influenza

How does novel H1N1 influenza spread? Novel H1N1 influenza virus is spread 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.

How can I protect myself from novel H1N1 influenza?

Here are the best ways to avoid getting or spreading novel H1N1 influenza:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not nearby, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue or the crook of your elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- **Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs often spread this way.
- **Stay away from people who are sick.**
- **If you get sick, limit contact with others to avoid infecting them.**

These are the same protections as for seasonal flu and many other respiratory infections.

What should I do if I have flu-like symptoms?

Anyone with a fever and cough or sore throat should stay home from work or school for at least 7 days, and not go back to work or school until 24 hours after the symptoms end. Wash your hands frequently. Always cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Call your health care provider if you are ill enough that you would normally see a health care provider. Use the same judgment you would use during a normal flu season. If you would not usually see a health care provider for the symptoms you have now, you do not need to see a health care provider. You should not go to the hospital for mild illness, but anyone with severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, should seek health care and treatment immediately.

Should I be tested for novel H1N1 influenza?

Knowing you have novel H1N1 influenza will not affect how you are medically treated, but testing certain affected people can help health officials track the spread of the disease. Testing is now only recommended for people who are hospitalized for flu-like symptoms.

Is there a vaccine for novel H1N1 influenza?

At this time, there is no vaccine for novel H1N1 influenza. The seasonal influenza vaccine does not protect you from novel H1N1 influenza. This makes the regular things you do to protect yourself from the flu, such as covering coughs and washing hands, all the more important.

If I experience flu symptoms, do I need medication?

The antiviral medicines Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) can help lessen novel H1N1 influenza symptoms, and are particularly important for people with severe illness or with risk factors for complications from flu. Groups at higher risk of complications from the novel H1N1 influenza include young children, pregnant women, and people with chronic illness. Flu patients who belong to those risk groups should seek treatment for flu symptoms. Treatment may also be appropriate for household members with special risk factors, to help prevent the infection.

What are the signs of more severe illness with novel H1N1 influenza?

While most of the current novel H1N1 influenza cases have been mild so far, people who get the flu should still be aware of some of the more severe illness with novel H1N1 influenza. If you become ill and have any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, symptoms that need emergency medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

What should I do if someone I live with is sick with flu-like symptoms?

Call your health care provider if the person is sick enough that you would normally see a health care provider. Use the same judgment you would use during a normal flu season. If you would not usually see a health care provider for the symptoms the person has, you do not need to take them to see a health care provider. If the symptoms are severe, the person should see a health care provider.

What should I do if someone I live with has confirmed novel H1N1 influenza?

Follow the same precautions you would to avoid ordinary seasonal flu:

- Limit your contact with the sick person. Avoid close contact such as kissing, and do not share towels, glasses or toothbrushes with the affected person.
- Avoid having visitors. If visitors must enter the home, they should avoid close contact with the affected person.

- Wash your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Wash dirty dishes and eating utensils in either a dishwasher or by hand with warm water and soap. You do not need to separate eating utensils for use by a patient with influenza.
- It is fine to do your laundry in a standard washing machine with warm or cold water and detergent. It is not necessary to separate the patient's laundry.

Can household cleaning help prevent transmission?

Yes. Studies have shown that the virus can live on a surface and can make a person sick for up to 2-8 hours. To help prevent transmission, all hard surfaces, such as doorknobs, refrigerator door handles, telephones, and bathroom surfaces, should be washed with soap or detergent, rinsed with water and then disinfected and rinsed. Disinfectants are those with "registered disinfectant" on the label. If disinfectants are not available, use a chlorine bleach solution made by adding 1 tablespoon of bleach to a quart (4 cups) of water. Use a cloth to apply this to surfaces and then rinse them with water. Dispose of the used bleach solution and mix a fresh solution when repeating the cleaning process. Use sanitizer cloths to wipe electronic items (phones, computes, remote controls) that are touched often.

What can I do if my anxiety about the situation feels overwhelming?

Looking for information is healthy, but watching report after report about novel H1N1 influenza may be distressing, especially for children. Parents should limit children's news-watching, watch the news with their children, and talk to them about the events that are occurring.

Should I send my children to school?

Yes. There is no reason for anyone to keep their children at home unless they are sick.

For facts about influenza, and more information about novel H1N1 influenza, please visit the Connecticut Flu Watch Website at www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch.