

H1N1 Novel Influenza

FACT SHEET

Jefferson County Public Health
1801 19th Street, Golden, CO
303-271-5700 <http://health.jeffco.us>



What is H1N1 influenza?

H1N1 flu, is a respiratory disease caused by a type of influenza virus. Recently, a new type of H1N1 flu virus has been found to cause illness in people, H1N1 Novel Influenza, previously referred to as “Swine Flu”. Since March 2009, there have been many cases of this new type of H1N1 flu in the United States and around the world. Public health officials nationwide are preparing for the potential of widespread flu activity this fall.

What are the symptoms of the new H1N1 flu in people?

The new H1N1 flu causes symptoms very similar to seasonal flu. Just like seasonal flu, the most common symptoms are fever, cough, and sore throat. They can also include body aches, headache, chills and feeling very tired. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. More severe illness, including pneumonia and even death can occur, but currently appears to be limited to those with other health conditions and risks, including lung and other chronic diseases, those severely obese, and in some cases, pregnancy.

How would I know if I have the new H1N1 flu?

Most cases of influenza illness will not require specific testing, but your physician can advise you further. If you have fever and cough or other symptoms of influenza it is important that you remain at home until you are no longer infectious. In most cases, that will be 7 days, but can be longer. Contact your health care provider if you have other health conditions that may put you at risk for more severe illness or if your symptoms appear to be worsening. If you need to see your health care provider, please call ahead and let them know you might have the flu. That way, precautions can be to avoid the spread of flu to others.

How is the new H1N1 flu treated?

People sick with any type of flu should make sure to drink enough fluids, get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods, wash hands frequently and stay home to avoid spreading the flu to other people. Most people will not need antivirals or drugs used to treat flu. Antivirals are generally used only for those with other health conditions that put them at risk for more serious disease. Healthcare providers may recommend that people who are sick with a flu-like illness receive an antiviral medication. A few influenza viruses, including H1N1, have been resistant to some, but not all, of these drugs.

Is there a vaccine for the new H1N1 flu?

A vaccine to protect against H1N1 is currently undergoing trials. According to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is unlikely that the vaccine for seasonal flu will prevent the new H1N1 flu. Thus, it will be important that both seasonal AND H1N1 vaccine be received to be fully protected. Jefferson County Public Health is working with emergency and community partners on plans for vaccine distribution when it becomes available.

How can I protect myself and others from the new H1N1 flu?

You can protect yourself and others from the new H1N1 flu the same way that you protect yourself from seasonal flu. Avoid holding, hugging, kissing, or shaking hands with anyone who has a cold or the flu. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes. Clean things that are touched often like door handles, telephones, faucets, etc. **If you get sick with a flu-like illness stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.**

People who have flu-like illness should do the following while recovering at home:

- Check with your health care provider(s) about any special care you might need if you are pregnant, immunosuppressed, or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.
- Check with your health care provider about whether or not you should take antiviral medications.
- **Stay home until at least 24 hours after fever is absent. The absence of fever must be without taking fever-reducing medication such as Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen.** Avoid close contact with others as much as possible, even at home.
- Identify a single household member as the ill person's caregiver to minimize interactions with others.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, or electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from getting dehydrated.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Wash or clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Wash hand prior to touching nose, eyes, mouth or before eating.
- Never cough or sneeze in the direction of someone else.
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might mean you need to seek medical attention.

Get medical care right away if the sick person at home:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- Has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions), is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

If someone in my house is sick, but I'm not, do I need to stay home?

You do not need to stay home or out of school if you are not sick as long as you are cautious about monitoring your own symptoms for early signs of fever and cough and wash hands frequently around others as a precaution. If you start feeling sick, especially with fever, cough, sore throat and feeling tired, you should stay at home and minimize contact with others as much as possible.

Is it safe to cook and eat pork and pork products?

Yes. It is safe to eat properly handled and cooked pork and pork products. Influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 from eating pork or pork products.

For more information about seasonal flu, pandemic flu, avian flu and H1N1, please visit the websites listed below or contact Jefferson County Public Health at 303-271-5700.

- **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment**
Colorado HELP Line 1-877-462-2911 <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/epr/H1N1.html>
- **Center for Disease Control (CDC) websites on H1N1** <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1>
- **Jefferson County Public Health** <http://health.jeffco.us> 303-271-5700