



FAQ: THE H1N1 VIRUS (SWINE FLU) AND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HEART DISEASE

What is H1N1?

H1N1 (formerly know as swine flu) is a new flu virus causing illness in people. This virus is spread from person-to-person in the same way that regular seasonal flu viruses spread.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

The symptoms of H1N1 are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and can 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 H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

How will getting H1N1 and/or the seasonal flu affect me and my heart disease?

Individuals with certain chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, may face special medical challenges during flu season. If you have heart disease you may experience a more severe illness from any influenza infection, including illness with H1N1.

What can I do to prepare for the H1N1 and/or seasonal flu?

- Talk with your doctor about obtaining a two-week supply of your medication(s) and the supplies necessary to administer medications.
- Keep the name, phone number and office address of your doctor or health care provider with you at all times.
- Get a written record of your heart disease and the treatment you are receiving. Keep this information with you at all times.
- Prepare a list of all medications usually taken and the times of day they are taken.



Public Health
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How can I protect myself?

- **Get vaccinated.**

Vaccination is the best way to protect your self. The H1N1 vaccine will become available in October 2009. Check the Multnomah County Health Department website at www.mchealth.org for the most up-to-date information on where to get the H1N1 vaccine or ask your health care provider. The H1N1 flu vaccine does not protect against seasonal flu or replace the need for seasonal flu vaccine.

- **Prevent infection.**

Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for twenty seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands, as this is how germs spread most quickly. Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Use a tissue or the crook of your elbow to cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze. If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home and contact your health care provider.

- **Stay healthy.**

Eat well, get plenty of rest and reduce your stress as much as possible. Staying healthy will help your immune system fight off a flu infection if you are exposed. If you are already taking medications, continue to take them as prescribed. If you have symptoms, contact your health care provider and follow his or her instructions. If you do seek health care for H1N1, your health care provider may recommend treatment with antiviral drugs.

When should I call my health care provider?

Be alert to symptoms that may indicate decreased heart function and/or symptoms that may indicate the need for immediate medical services. Call your health care provider if any of the following happen to you:

- You notice changes in your breathing, experience chest pains or other symptoms of heart failure.
- You have questions about appropriate medication dosage during your illness.
- Your body temperature is over 101 degrees F.

For more information, please call the Oregon Public Health Hot Line at 1-800-978-3040.

www.mchealth.org