



## **FAQs ABOUT THE H1N1 FLU**

### **December 28, 2009**

Pandemic H1N1 influenza means that the H1N1 influenza virus is circulating all over the world. This virus – sometimes called swine flu – is in our community too. The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (the CDC) expects that people will continue getting sick with the H1N1 virus throughout the winter months.

#### **How severe is it?**

Most people infected with H1N1 influenza have symptoms similar to seasonal influenza, including cough, sore throat, body aches and pains, and a fever. Though influenza is a respiratory disease – one that affects the head and chest – ill people can also experience diarrhea and vomiting. The concern with H1N1 influenza is that some otherwise healthy people – especially young adults, children and pregnant women – have become sick enough to be put in the hospital or have died from complications related to their flu. People with chronic illnesses, such as asthma, lung disease, diabetes, heart, liver or kidney disease, have also been experiencing severe complications from H1N1 influenza.

#### **How is it spread?**

Just like seasonal flu and other viruses, H1N1 can be spread when someone with the virus coughs or sneezes on you. It can also spread when you touch something with flu virus on it and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth.

#### **Is there a vaccine?**

There is a vaccine that was developed just for this H1N1 virus and although vaccine supplies were limited at first, the H1N1 vaccine is now readily available.

The following groups are prioritized for vaccination because of their increased risk of complications from flu:

- Pregnant women
- Families and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months
- Anyone 6 months to 25 years of age
- Adults 25 to 64 who have underlying health conditions
- Healthcare and emergency medical workers



### **I've already been sick. Do I still need to get vaccinated?**

Yes. Unless you were tested specifically for the H1N1 flu virus, you don't know if that is what made you sick. Getting vaccinated against H1N1 influenza will help protect you and others in case what you already had was not the H1N1 flu.

### **What can I do to keep from getting the H1N1 flu?**

There are everyday actions that can help keep you healthy and prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like colds and flu (including H1N1). To protect yourself and others follow these simple guidelines:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Use your sleeve or a tissue, not your hands.
- Clean your hands often – especially after sneezing and coughing – with soap and water, or with an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

### **What if I get sick?**

Most people who get sick with H1N1 flu recover at home with self-care. If you develop possible flu symptoms and you want to talk with your health care provider, call them before you go in for an office visit. If you do not have a health care provider and would like to talk to one, call the public health hotline at 1-800-978-3040 where you will be connected with someone who can help you.

If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, do what you can to keep from spreading the virus:

- Stay home from work or school, and generally avoid going out in public.
- Remain home until 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If you are an employer, encourage sick employees to stay home.
- If you are a parent, keep sick children out of daycare, school, camps and other events.

People who are at particularly high risk for complications from the H1N1 flu include:

- Pregnant women
- Young children
- People with chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease or blood diseases
- People with immune systems made weaker by medications or conditions such as HIV.



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If you or someone you are caring for is in one of these groups and has flu-like symptoms, call your health care provider right away.

### **Where can I learn more?**

You can find the latest information on the flu, flu vaccine and the current flu situation at:

The Multnomah County Health Department website: **[www.mchealth.org](http://www.mchealth.org)**

The Oregon Public Health Division website: **[www.flu.oregon.gov](http://www.flu.oregon.gov)**

The State Public Health Hotline: **1-800-978-3040**

**[www.mchealth.org](http://www.mchealth.org)**