

Treating Flu: Both H1N1 (Swine) and Seasonal

The H1N1 (Swine) Flu and Seasonal Flu Viruses

Seasonal flu viruses circulate yearly. The novel H1N1 (Swine) flu virus is a new flu virus causing illness around the world. H1N1 (Swine) flu causes disease of similar severity to some seasonal flu viruses. What's different is that more of us are susceptible to it. H1N1 is heavily impacting people under 25 years old. People over 65 years are heavily impacted by seasonal flu, but rarely get H1N1 flu.



H1N1 (Swine) Symptoms are Similar to Seasonal

The symptoms of H1N1 (Swine) flu and seasonal flu are similar – fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Sometimes, people also have diarrhea and vomiting. People are usually sick for 2-4 days, sometimes longer. Disease severity is also similar. The vast majority of people are mildly to moderately ill with flu. Very serious complications of flu, including pneumonia, hospitalizations and even death, do occur, but it is in a very small percent of cases.

Avoid Spreading Flu to Others

If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home until you have been fever free for 24 hours, off of fever-reducing medicines. Stay apart from others as much as possible. You're most likely to spread flu to people within 6 feet of you. If sick and you have to be very close to others, wear a surgical mask if you can or cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Although you can shed virus from just before symptom start to a few days after recovery, people are most contagious when they have symptoms, especially fever.

Know Your Risk for Complications. It Guides Care You Need.

Anyone can have complications from flu, but some people are at higher risk of serious complications than others. This includes pregnant women, children younger than 5 years old (especially those less than 2), people over 65, and people with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma and lung diseases, diabetes, heart, neurologic / neuromuscular, kidney, or liver disease, or a weakened immune system).

Treatment of H1N1 (Swine) Flu and Seasonal Flu is Similar



Most people recover with good basic care at home and don't need testing, medical care, or antiviral medications. However.....

If you have flu-like illness and are at high risk for complications of flu call your health care provider or urgent care center early to assess the need for medical evaluation or antivirals. Do not go to the emergency department with mild symptoms.

As always, if you have severe symptoms, see a health care provider right away.

Things you can do to care for yourself at home include:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- Over the counter medications you would normally use for colds and flu can help treat the symptoms, for example, acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®) for fever; cough medicines or decongestants. Check the label to see if over the counter medicines already contain acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Don't double dose!
- Children less than 18 years of age with flu should never be given aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) containing products, for aspirin can put them at risk for a complication called Reye's Syndrome.

Antiviral Drugs are Important for Some People, but Not Everyone with Flu

- Antivirals [oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) or zanamivir (Relenza®)] are most important to use in people at high risk of complications from flu and in people very sick from flu, especially hospitalized persons.
- While they do not cure flu, they can help reduce disease severity, duration, or complications.
- These medications must be prescribed by a health care professional.
- For treatment, the drugs work best if given within 2 days of becoming ill, but may be given later if illness is severe or a person is at high risk for complications.
- Sometimes, antivirals are also used to prevent disease in high risk, close contacts of cases.

Watch for Emergency Warning Signs that Might Indicate You Need to Seek Medical Attention Quickly

In children, those include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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

In adults, emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Find Out More

- Visit the following websites for additional guidance: www.cdc.gov for national information or www.wvflu.org for West Virginia specific information.
- Speak to your health care provider or local health department.
- Follow public health advice.
- Consider developing a family emergency plan as a precaution for more serious pandemics or other emergencies. This includes plans for childcare should schools be closed, a supply of food and medicines if you are staying home for a few days, etc. See www.wvflu.org, "At Home".

