

H1N1 Flu Information for the Public

Human cases of H1N1 (swine flu) have been identified in the United States. Look to the Howard County Health Department to keep you up to date on the flu outbreak.

The information on this page comes from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

We will update our website regularly as new information becomes available.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about H1N1

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What is H1N1 (swine flu)?

H1N1 or swine flu is an illness caused by a new form of the flu virus. The virus is spreading from person-to-person just like the regular flu.

What's the big deal about H1N1?

H1N1 is a new form of the flu virus. Because it is new, we don't have any immunity to it.

What are the symptoms?

Fever and one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills and fatigue
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea

Who is most at risk should they get sick with H1N1?

Anyone can get the flu. But the groups below should call their doctor right away if they have the signs of H1N1.

- Children less than 5 years old;
- Persons aged 65 years or older;
- Children and teens (less than 18 years) who are on long-term aspirin therapy;
- Pregnant women;
- Adults and children who have chronic diseases;
- Adults and children who have HIV or immune system problems;
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care places.

When should I call my doctor?

You should take care of yourself at home like you would any illness. Drink lots of clear fluid, take medicine to lower your fever, and rest. If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from getting sick. People with the flu should stay away from others for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.

If you are a member of a group listed above, you should call the doctor if:

- You or a family member has flu-like symptoms, including a fever that is higher than 100°F (37.8°C) AND a cough, sore throat, runny nose, or stuffiness.

What if I do not have a regular doctor?

If you meet the symptom checklist listed above and you do not have a regular doctor, call one of our local urgent care centers.

A list of urgent care centers located in Howard County is available at http://www.howardcountymd.gov/Health/docs/Urgent_care_centers.pdf

When should I go to the emergency room or call an ambulance?

A sick person may need medical help right away if he or she:

- Is breathing fast, has trouble breathing, or has chest or belly pain.
- Has bluish skin or lip color (for fair tones) and grayish skin or lip color (for darker tones).
- Has sudden dizziness.
- Is not drinking enough fluids.
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down.
- Is not waking up or not interacting normally.
- Has flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- Has a fever with a rash.
- Is unable to urinate for a long period of time.
- Has seizures.
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused.

[Click here to get information about caring for a sick person in your home.](#)

How does H1N1 spread?

People with the flu can give you the virus if they cough or sneeze near you. You can also become sick by touching something with germs on it, such as door knobs, and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose. Unless they need urgent medical help, adults who are sick should be cared for at home.

How long is a person with the flu able to give the flu to others?

This is still unknown. You may be able to spread flu germs for up to 1 day before and up to 7 days after you start having symptoms.

Is there a vaccine for H1N1?

A vaccine to prevent H1N1 is still being tested. The best way to prevent the spread of H1N1 is by staying away from sick people, washing your hands often, and covering your cough.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick.

- Get your seasonal flu shot early this fall. Get your shot for FREE at the annual drive-thru flu clinic on October 4th.
- If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from getting sick. People with the flu should

- stay away from others for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or inside of your elbow when you cough or sneeze. Make sure to put used tissues in the trash after one use.
 - Wash your hands often with warm water and soap. Alcohol-based hand cleaners like Purell also work.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - Get plenty of sleep, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

[Tips for Staying Healthy \(in English\)](#)

[Tips for Staying Healthy \(in Korean\)](#)

[Tips for Staying Healthy \(in Spanish\)](#)

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often helps protect you from germs.

Use soap and warm water when you wash your hands. Wash for 15 to 20 seconds. Have your child sing two verses of “Happy Birthday” to allow for enough time.

When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand wipes or gel may be used. You can find them in many supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

Can people catch H1N1 from eating pork?

No. You cannot catch H1N1 from eating food or being near pigs.

Where can I go for more information?

Howard County Health Department – www.hchealth.org

The Health Department will update our website regularly about H1N1.

For more information, we recommend that you go to the following websites:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

The State of Maryland

<http://www.dhmdh.md.gov/swineflu/index.html>