



Howard County Flu Line – (410) 313-6503

www.hchealth.org

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H1N1 (Swine Flu): Information for Child Care Providers

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

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.

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.

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

How long is a person with H1N1 able to give it to others?

We don't know for sure. You may be able to spread flu germs for up to 1 day before and up to 7 days after you start having symptoms.

When should I call an ambulance for a sick student or staff member?

A sick student or staff member 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.

What are eight easy steps I can take to protect my staff and children?

1. Urge students and staff to get a seasonal flu shot or FluMist.

Get your seasonal flu shot or FluMist early this year. Then get your H1N1 shot when it is available. Get your seasonal flu shot for FREE at the annual Howard County drive-thru flu clinic on Sunday, October 4, 2009 from 10 AM – 2 PM.

2. Stay home when 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. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.

3. Watch students for mood or behavior changes.

These children may be getting sick. Check their temperatures. An example of how to conduct daily health checks can be found by [clicking here](#).

4. Separate ill students and staff:

Students and staff who have flu-like symptoms should be sent to a room separate from others until they can go home. They should wear a surgical mask while they wait. Staff who care for ill students and staff should also wear a surgical mask.

5. Cover your cough and wash your hands:

Wash hands often with soap and water. Cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available). Teach your children these important skills.

6. Clean often:

Clean toys, door knobs, desks, and other areas that students and staff touch with your normal cleaners. Clean them often. No other special cleaning is needed.

7. High-risk students and staff should see a doctor right away if they get sick:

Anyone can get the flu. Those 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.

8. Work with the health department:

If 10% of your staff or students call out sick with flu-like illness, call the Howard County Health Department for advice.

What other steps should my program take in response to H1N1?

- Review your emergency plans. Make sure that you and your staff are up to date. Talk often with the parents of the children in your program. Let them know what to expect.
- Remind sick workers to 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. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.
- Children with a fever should not come to child care or day care. Children with other, mild respiratory illnesses including allergies and asthma may be allowed to attend child care or day care. For more information, please see the Caring for Our Children- Standard 3.065, which is available on line at <http://www.nrckids.org/CFOC/PDFVersion/Chapter%203.pdf> (pg 124)
- Develop a system to track absence due to illness among children and staff. The system should be simple and easy to maintain. It should record the number of persons with flu-like symptoms by day or at least by week. For information on how to set up a system, please see Caring for Our Children Standards 3.001 and 3.002 which is available online at <http://www.nrckids.org/CFOC/PDFVersion/Chapter%203.pdf>
- Post signs to help remind students and staff about handwashing and covering coughs. See <http://tinyurl.com/howardH1N1>

What can we all do to keep from getting seasonal flu or H1N1?

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

- 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 way to wash my hands and avoid getting H1N1?

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.

Where can I go for more information and resources?

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.dhmf.md.gov/swineflu/index.html>

Info on disaster preparedness can be found at the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies' (NACCRRA) website:

http://www.naccrra.org/for_parents/coping/disaster.php

Planning tools for child care programs and schools, including examples of state and local plans, can be found on the Department of Education's website:

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/index.html>