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H1N1 (Swine Flu): Guidance on Parties, Social Events, and Religious Services

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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?

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.

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. To lower the spread of H1N1, adults who are sick should be cared for at home unless they need urgent medical care.

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 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.

Should I cancel my upcoming party or family gathering because of H1N1?

If you or a family member has flu-like symptoms, you may want to reschedule your event. If not, have fun but take these steps to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Get your seasonal flu shot or flu mist early this fall. Get it for FREE at the annual Health Department drive-thru flu clinic on Sunday, October 4th from 10 AM - 2 PM. Go to Columbia Gateway Drive in Columbia and enter from Rt. 175.
- Stay away from people who are sick.

- 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 until 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 for at least 20 seconds. 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 healthy food.

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

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

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

Should I stop going to religious services?

If you or a family member has flu-like symptoms, you should stay home. People with the flu should stay away from others until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.

Should we wear masks?

Not at this time. If your members have flu-like symptoms, they should stay home. People with the flu should stay away from others until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.

Should we require social distancing (no handshakes, etc.)?

Not at this time. If your members have flu-like symptoms, they should stay home. People with the flu should stay away from others until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.

What should we tell our members about H1N1?

Give them tips on how they can stay healthy. Remind members to cover coughs, wash hands often, and stay home if sick. You will find helpful tip-sheets and flyers to post at <http://www.hchealth.org>

Is there anything else we can do to help slow the spread of H1N1?

You may want to post signs reminding members about hand-washing and use alcohol-based gels like Purell before handling any food or drink.

Where can I go for more information or 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.dhmh.md.gov/swineflu/index.html>