

2009 H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza)

Information for the Public

September 25, 2009

Regular updates about H1N1 are issued by Federal, Provincial and local health authorities. Please refer to the following web sites for additional and new information:

**Vancouver Island Health Authority: www.viha.ca/h1n1
Provincial Government: www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/
Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca**

What is H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu)?

The H1N1 influenza virus (human swine influenza or human swine flu) is a respiratory disease in humans caused by type A influenza virus. This particular strain has originated in swine, although it is now transmitted between people. Contact with swine is no longer a concern. The H1N1 virus causes an infection of the respiratory tract, including the nose, nasal passages, throat, lungs and bronchial tubes.

How is H1N1 influenza spread?

The flu is caused by viruses, and is generally spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus in the cough/sneeze droplets can be passed to the next person by landing on them or on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where it can be picked up on hands and transmitted to the respiratory system by touching the mouth and/or nose. This is why it is really important to wash your hands frequently.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza?

Symptoms of H1N1 are similar to the common flu and may include fever, cough, headache, general aches and fatigue. Some people have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

What do I do if I think I am sick with H1N1 influenza?

If you think you are sick with H1N1 influenza, you should respond the same way you would if you had contracted the regular, or seasonal, influenza: Stay away from work or school for at least seven days from the start of your symptoms. Limit your contact with other people so you don't spread the infection. Take Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen for your fever and body aches. Stay hydrated by drinking fluids. Allow your body to get better by getting lots of rest. Call HealthLink BC for information and advice.

Phone: 811 (711 for deaf and hard of hearing)

Web: www.healthlinkbc.ca

See a health care provider only if your symptoms become worse.

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What should I do if I've been in contact with someone who has the H1N1 flu?

Watch for symptoms, including fever and a new cough, for 10 days. If you're not feeling sick, you do not need to see a doctor or take medications. If you begin to feel sick, follow the steps outlined on page 1.

Is there any treatment for H1N1 flu?

Only individuals who have complications or who are at risk for complications from influenza will receive antiviral medication (Tamiflu). High risk groups have been identified as: individuals under 65 with chronic health conditions, pregnant women, obese individuals, and those of Aboriginal descent.

Can I get tested for H1N1?

Routine testing for H1N1 is no longer taking place. Only individuals who are ill enough to require hospital admission will be tested for H1N1.

Do I need to wear a mask?

If you are not ill, you do not need to wear a mask in public areas. If you have symptoms (e.g. coughing, sneezing), you will be asked to wear a mask in places such as doctors' offices, walk-in clinics and emergency departments. The mask should cover your mouth and nose, with the straps looped over your ears to hold the mask in place.

How do I stop the spread of the H1N1 flu?

- Stay at home when you're sick or have flu symptoms.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs can spread that way.

When should I seek medical care?

If you develop shortness of breath, have a fever for more than five days, cough up sputum with blood, or are dehydrated, seek medical attention. Expect to feel weak and generally unwell with influenza. If you have additional concerns seek medical attention.

Please visit the VIHA website for additional and new information:

www.viha.ca/h1n1

