

Guidance for Influenza Infection Control

To date, H1N1 virus infections have been confirmed in residents of several U.S. states and Mexico. Investigations of these cases suggest that on-going human to human contact of H1N1 virus is occurring.

Be Aware of Common Flu Symptoms

Influenza (commonly called the “flu”) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. The information below describes common flu symptoms, how to protect yourself and those close to you from getting the flu, and what to do if you get sick with flu-like symptoms.

Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high)
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

Diagnosing the Flu

It can be difficult to distinguish the flu from other infections on the basis of symptoms alone. A doctor's exam may be needed to tell whether you have developed the flu or a complication of the flu. There are tests that can determine if you have the flu as long you are tested within the first 2 or 3 days of illness. If you develop flu-like symptoms and are concerned about your illness, especially if are at high risk for complications of the flu, you should consult your healthcare provider.

People May Have Different Reactions to the Flu

The flu can cause mild to severe illness and at times can lead to death. Although most healthy people recover from the flu without complications, some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), are at high risk for serious complications from the flu.

Know How the Flu Spreads

The flu usually spreads from person to person in respiratory droplets when people who are infected cough or sneeze. People occasionally may become infected by touching something with influenza virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Healthy adults may be able to infect others **1 day before** getting symptoms and up to **5 days after** getting sick. Therefore, it is possible to give someone the flu before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick.

How to Protect Yourself

The following practices can be used to help prevent transmission of all respiratory infections, including H1N1:

- **Wash your hands and keep them away from your face** — Wash your hands, including the area between your fingers, with soap several times a day for 20-30 seconds. Avoid touching the mucous membrane of your mouth, eyes & nose.
- **Cough hygienically** – If you cough, stand away from other people. The best thing is to cough into your sleeve, not into your hand to prevent germ transmission.

- **Recover from illness at home** – Don't go to work with a feverish cold, gastroenteritis or flu. Instead, contribute to your recuperation with rest and protect colleagues from contracting illness. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.
- **Watch out for early signs** – A sudden high temperature, feeling very ill, coughing and body aches are signs of the flu.
- **Get well again** – Listen to your body. If you have typical signs of flu, ask your doctor by phone how to proceed.
- **Protect members of your family** – If you are ill, avoid physical contact. Wherever possible, stay in a separate room. Pay attention to general cleanliness in your home, especially the kitchen and bathroom.
- **Ventillate closed rooms regularly** – Air closed-up rooms regularly 3-4 times a day for ten minutes at a time to reduce the number of viruses in the air.
- **Keep your distance and avoid crowds** – Protect yourself and others by keeping a distance of 6 feet. Avoid shaking hands and crowds.
- **Know about hygienic masks** – There is not sufficient data on the effectiveness of hygienic masks during a pandemic. For this reason they are only to be considered as an additional precautionary measure.

If You Are Sick, Avoid Contact With Others

If you are sick, you may be ill for a week or longer. You should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially to people at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. This includes avoiding travel and not going to work or school, except to get medical care or for other necessities. If you must leave the house to seek medical care, wear a facemask, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.

CDC recommends that people with influenza-like illness **remain at home** until **at least 24 hours** after they are **free of fever** (100° F [37.8°C]), or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications. This recommendation applies to camps, schools, businesses, mass gatherings, and other community settings where the majority of people are not at increased risk for influenza complications. This recommendation does not apply to health care settings where the exclusion period should be continued for 7 days from symptom onset or until 24 hours after the resolution of symptoms, whichever is longer.

Adapted from: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms.htm>
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/workplace.htm>
http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidelines_infection_control.htm
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/exclusion.htm>
<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm#3>