

H1N1 (swine flu) Fact Sheet



Information for people living in Contra Costa County:

Cases of H1N1 (swine flu) have been identified in Contra Costa County. Most cases have been mild and most people recover. It is now assumed that the virus is present throughout the community. There are more cases occurring in Contra Costa and we expect to see additional cases and as a result more severe disease. Everyone is urged to continue to wash their hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes and stay home from school or work if sick.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

The symptoms of H1N1 in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and may include fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat, body aches and headache. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 may make underlying chronic medical conditions worse; such as chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes and others.

People with more severe illness may experience difficulty breathing, dehydration, prolonged vomiting, diarrhea or fevers of more than 100° F that do not get better when taking over-the-counter fever-reducing medications. Anyone with these symptoms should contact their health care provider right away.

How do you catch H1N1?

H1N1 is spread from person-to-person in the same way as seasonal flu, when a person infected with H1N1 sneezes, coughs or even talks. The H1N1 virus is put into the air and may be inhaled by anyone close by. Occasionally, a person may become infected by touching something with the virus on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Like regular flu, the H1N1 virus can live for several days on surfaces such as doorknobs so frequent hand washing is important.

H1N1 is not spread by food.

People with H1N1 influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and possibly for up to 7 days following illness onset. Children might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, runny nose, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, diarrhea and vomiting, you should contact your health care provider, especially if you have chronic medical conditions. If you do not have a health care provider, you can call the Contra Costa Health Services Advice Nurse Line at 1-877-661-6230. **Please do not go to the Emergency Room unless you have a medical emergency.** Stay home from work or school and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep your illness from spreading to others. No one should return to school or work until they have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine, even if they feel better. If you experience difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion and/or severe or persistent vomiting, seek emergency medical care by calling 911 or going to the nearest hospital.

In children, emergency warning signs of H1N1 flu that need urgent medical attention include: Fast breathing or trouble breathing, bluish skin color, not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held, flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

If you are diagnosed with H1N1 you do not need to report it to Contra Costa Public Health. Contra Costa Public Health only receives disease reports from health care providers.

We are recommending that only people who are hospitalized with flu-like symptoms be tested for H1N1.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1?

Yes. Your doctor can determine if you need medication, such as when you have been exposed or are ill. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with these H1N1 influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs may make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started within 2 days of the start of symptoms.

We are not recommending treatment with antivirals unless your health provider advises you to do so.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against H1N1. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue in the trash
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid close contact with sick people. Try to stay at least 6 feet away from those who may be sick
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. If you are caring for someone with the flu remember to wash your hands often and encourage good cough etiquette in the person who is ill.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way

Should I wear a mask?

We are not recommending the general public wear facemasks. We are recommending that people who are sick with flu-like symptoms wear a facemask around others outside of the home.

Should I avoid public places?

If you are well, there is no reason to avoid public places at this time. Remember to follow good hand hygiene, good cough etiquette and stay away from those that are ill.

If you are ill, stay home and do not go to school or work. Call your health care provider before going into the medical office or clinic.

Are there any travel restrictions due to H1N1?

H1N1 is occurring around the world. People at risk with severe disease should discuss international travel with their health care providers. Travelers should avoid contact with people who are sick and should follow the recommended prevention steps.

Where can I get more information?

Up-to-date information on H1N1 in English and Spanish is available on the Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) website: www.cchealth.org and on CCHS' Health Emergency Information Line at 1-888-959-9911. You can also sign up to follow CCHS on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/CoCoHealth>.