

Flu-Like Illness



Frequently Asked Questions

What is seasonal flu?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs that is caused by influenza virus. The flu can spread from person to person. Most people with flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. However, some people (especially young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic health problems) can get very sick and some can die.

What is H1N1?

Novel H1N1 flu is a new and very different influenza virus that is spreading worldwide among people. This new virus was called "swine flu" at first because it has pieces of flu viruses found in pigs in the past. However, novel H1N1 virus has not been detected in U.S. pigs.

What are the symptoms of seasonal flu and H1N1?

Symptoms of seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu include: fever (greater than 100°F / 38°C) cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately:**

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Irritable
- Fever and shaking chills
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Sudden dizziness
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
- Not waking up or lethargy

How does the flu spread?

People that have the flu usually cough, sneeze and have a runny nose. This makes droplets with virus in them. Other people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets, getting them in their nose or mouth, or touching contaminated surfaces.

Healthy adults may be able to spread the flu from 1 day before getting sick to up to 5 days after getting sick. This can be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease as well (people with weakened immune systems).

Should I go to school or work if my roommate is sick?

Students who are well but who have an ill person at home with flu-like symptom can go to school and work as usual. These people should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. If they become ill, they should notify their professors and/or supervisors and stay home. Those who have an underlying medical condition (see above) or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs.

I have flu-like symptoms. Should I go see a doctor?

YES Students with chronic medical problems experiencing flu-like illness need to be seen by a medical provider. To obtain an appointment, please call your medical provider if you have any of the following medical problems:

- Immunosuppression due to HIV / AIDs, chemotherapy, cancer , chronic steroid use
- Pregnant women
- Asthma or chronic pulmonary disease (e.g. cystic fibrosis)
- Cardiovascular disease (e.g. congenital heart disease)
- Chronic renal or hepatic disease (e.g. nephritis, dialysis, chronic hepatitis)
- Neuromuscular disorders (e.g. multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy)
- Diabetes, adrenal insufficiency (e.g. Addison’s disease)
- Hematologic disorders (e.g. platelet and clotting disorders)
- Chronic rheumatologic disorder (e.g. lupus, rheumatoid arthritis)
- Gastrointestinal disease (e.g. Crohn’s, ulcerative colitis)

If your flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough, call your medical provider immediately.

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

For most healthy adults, medication is not generally prescribed, but antiviral drugs are available that can treat both seasonal flu and H1N1. These drugs can make people feel better and get better sooner. But they need to be prescribed by a doctor and they work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. The priority use for these drugs is to treat people who require hospitalization or have a medical condition that puts them at high risk of serious flu complications.

I think I had the flu and feel better now. Can I go back to work and school?

Persons should stay at home and avoid contact with others for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (without using any fever reducing medication). Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

This is an extremely important public health measure that will help limit the spread of the flu virus.

Should I get vaccinated for seasonal flu and H1N1?

CDC recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal flu. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three seasonal viruses that research suggests will be most common. **A seasonal vaccine will not protect you against H1N1.** A vaccine against H1N1 flu is being produced and will be available in the coming months as an option for the prevention of the new H1N1 flu.

Where can I get more information?

www.flu.gov
www.cdc.gov/flu
www.who.int