



## H1N1 2009 Flu: A Guide for the Public Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is H1N1 2009 flu?**

The H1N1 2009 flu being reported around the world is a new type of flu virus never before seen in humans. H1N1 2009 flu is contagious and can be spread from human to human.

### **How does H1N1 2009 flu compare to seasonal flu in terms of its severity?**

At present, H1N1 2009 flu appears to be only slightly more severe than seasonal influenza in that in most cases it causes mild to moderate illness. As with all types of influenza, however, some cases do result in deaths. Because it is a new disease and viruses change over time, health officials are monitoring cases closely and will revise their assessments as needed.

### **Are people infected with H1N1 2009 flu in Sonoma County?**

Yes, there have been cases of H1N1 2009 flu reported in Sonoma County and it is circulating widely in Sonoma County, the United States, and the rest of the world. Health officials are closely monitoring local and national situations to keep healthcare providers and the public informed of important developments as they arise.

### **How do you catch H1N1 2009 flu?**

H1N1 2009 flu is spread through contact with a person with H1N1 2009 flu, in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is spread by infected people mainly through the droplets they spread in the air and deposit on surfaces through coughing or sneezing. Persons who are sick should avoid going out in public to reduce the risk of infecting others.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 2009 flu in people?**

The symptoms of H1N1 2009 flu are like those of regular seasonal flu and include **fever**, **cough**, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting with H1N1 2009 flu. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 2009 flu may make other chronic health problems worse. Anyone with severe or prolonged symptoms should contact his or her doctor.

### **Is there a vaccine for H1N1 2009 flu?**

A new H1N1 2009 vaccine is in development and is expected to be available this fall. It should become available at the usual places people go for seasonal flu shots, like doctors offices, clinics, and some pharmacies. Local health officials are presently developing plans for public vaccination delivery programs for those people who are unable to get the vaccine through at the usual sites. Depending on the severity of the epidemic, the availability of the vaccine and other considerations, the vaccinations may be given first to certain groups at greater risk for exposure and illness, such as younger people (children and younger adults), pregnant women, healthcare personnel, and people with underlying health conditions.

People should plan to get both the seasonal flu shot, as soon as it becomes available and the H1N1 2009 flu shot when it comes out later in the fall. The H1N1 2009 flu shot may require two separate doses.

### **How long can an infected person spread H1N1 2009 flu to others?**

People with H1N1 2009 flu are likely to be contagious as long as they have flu symptoms, but especially while they are having fevers. Children, especially younger children, may be contagious longer.

### **What can I do to protect myself and my family from getting sick?**

Practice everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of flu. Take these steps to protect yourself and your family.

- Get vaccinated for both seasonal and H1N1 2009 flu.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze and before you eat or touch your face. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with flu, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### **What should I do if someone in my family gets sick?**

If you or someone in your family becomes ill with flu-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, stay home, drink plenty of fluids and get lots of rest. Contact your doctor if you have an underlying medical condition like asthma, heart disease, diabetes, severe obesity, or if there is a problem with your immune system or if you are worried that your symptoms seem severe. Your doctor will determine whether testing or treatment is needed.

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. **Do not send your child to school if he or she is sick.** Do not return to school or work until you have had no fevers for at least 24 hours.

More information on H1N1 2009 flu can be found at:

Sonoma County Public Health website: [www.sonoma-county.org/h1n1](http://www.sonoma-county.org/h1n1)

California Department of Public Health website: [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

Centers for Disease Control website: [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)

OR call Sonoma County Public Health at (707) 565-4477

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