



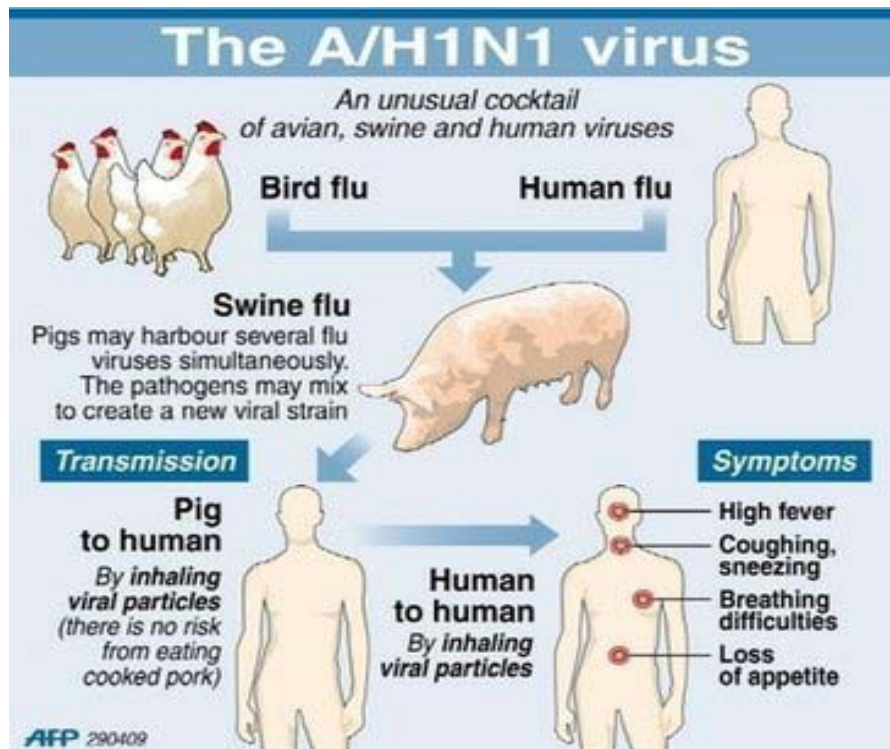
Westport Weston
Health District

public health services and information for our communities....

H1N1 FLU OUTBREAK

An Update and Current Recommendations

June 2009



H1N1 FLU—PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARATION

The Department of Health and Human Services issued a nationwide public health emergency declaration on Sunday April 26th in response to recent human infections with a newly discovered H1N1 influenza A (swine flu) virus.

The formal declaration of a Public Health Emergency (PHE) is a tool that facilitates HHS' preparation and mobilization for disasters and emergencies. For example, PHEs were recently declared for flooding in North Dakota, the Inauguration, and several 2008 hurricanes.

This declaration, made under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, will help HHS prepare for prevention and mitigation activities by enabling Food and Drug Administration (FDA) emergency use authorizations of drugs, devices, or medical tests under certain circumstances. It will enable the FDA to review and issue emergency use authorizations (EUAs) for the use of certain laboratory tests to help detect the newly discovered strain of influenza and for the emergency use of certain antivirals. "HHS is taking these steps to be proactive in responding to this new influenza virus by offering national tools in support of community-led preparedness and response efforts," Acting HHS Secretary Charles Johnson said. "The declaration allows us the flexibility, while we learn more about the virus and its impact in the United States, to take additional steps to fully mobilize our prevention, treatment and mitigation capabilities should those actions become necessary." In addition to the declaration, HHS leaders are working together across operating divisions to coordinate response to the H1N1 flu outbreak. For example, the FDA, the National Institutes of Health, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are working together to develop a vaccine precursor that could be used to develop a vaccine for this H1N1 flu virus.

Background on current situation

This influenza A (H1N1) virus is very different from seasonal human influenza A (H1N1) viruses. Preliminary studies of the H1N1 influenza viruses that have been tested are similar to each other. Additional testing is being done on the viruses.

The viruses contain genetic pieces from four different virus sources: North American swine influenza viruses, North American avian influenza viruses, human influenza viruses and swine influenza viruses found in Asia and Europe.

This particular genetic combination of H1N1 influenza virus segments has not been recognized before in the United States or anywhere else worldwide.

The H1N1 influenza viruses are resistant (not sensitive) to amantadine and rimantadine, two of the antiviral medications approved to prevent and treat influenza in the U.S.

The viruses are susceptible (sensitive) to the influenza antiviral medications, oseltamivir (TamiFlu) and zanamivir.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 Influenza is a respiratory disease caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. H1N1 flu viruses have been reported to spread from person-to-person, but in the past, this transmission was limited and not sustained beyond three people.

How many human infections of H1N1 flu are in the U.S.?

In late March and early April 2009, cases of human infection with H1N1 influenza A viruses were first reported in Southern California and near San Antonio, Texas. Since then, all 50 states have had confirmed cases of H1N1 flu infection in humans. An updated case count of confirmed H1N1 flu infections in the United States can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/update.htm>. CDC and local and state health agencies are working together to investigate this situation.

Is this H1N1 flu virus contagious?

CDC has determined that this H1N1 influenza A virus is contagious and is easily spread from human to human. Fortunately, the number of patients needing hospitalization is relatively low. Most people recover with little or no medical care.

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

The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human flu and include fever at or above 100⁰F and a cough or sore throat. Body aches, headache, chills and fatigue are also common. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with H1N1 flu. In people with certain underlying chronic conditions, severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with H1N1 flu infection.

How does H1N1 flu spread?

Spread of this H1N1 influenza A virus happens in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 7 or more days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick, or have recovered.

What should I do to keep from getting the flu?

First and most important: *wash your hands*. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep. Be physically active. Manage your stress. Drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food. Try not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 flu?

Yes. CDC has released guidelines for physicians regarding appropriate use of the antivirals oseltamivir or zanamivir 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 can 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 soon after getting sick (within 2 days of symptoms). The decision regarding treatment with antivirals is made by the patient and physician.

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

People with H1N1 influenza virus infection should be considered potentially contagious for 7 days following illness onset, or 24 hours after symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Germs can be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface like a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent hand washing will help you reduce the chance of getting contamination from these common surfaces.

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

While a vaccine is being developed, it is not available right now to protect against H1N1 flu. 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:

- ◆ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Cough into the crook of your elbow if you do not have a tissue.
- ◆ Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol (greater than 60% alcohol) based hand cleaners are also effective.
- ◆ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ◆ Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- ◆ If you get sick with influenza, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick, limit your contact with other people as much as possible. Do not go to work or school if ill. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Cover your cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever equal to or greater than 100°F with a cough and/or sore throat, you should contact your health care provider. Your health care provider will determine whether influenza 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.

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

In children, emergency warning signs 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
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

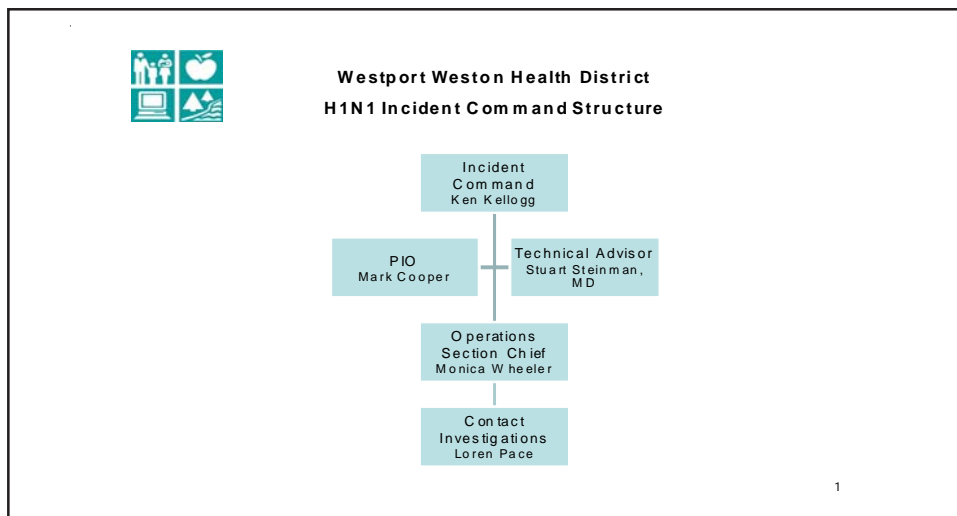
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

How serious is H1N1 flu infection?

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Between 2005 until January 2009, 12 human cases of H1N1 flu were detected in the U.S. with no deaths occurring. By June 3, 2009, all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico were reporting cases of H1N1 flu. Most cases have been mild and required little or no medical care. However, H1N1 flu infection can be serious, particularly for individuals with other chronic underlying medical conditions..

Can I get H1N1 influenza from eating or preparing pork?

No. H1N1 influenza viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get H1N1 influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.



The Westport Weston Health District is a governmental agency that provides public health services to the residents of Westport and Weston. Health District program areas include environmental health, prevention of disease, health promotion, emergency management and public education. Health District hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday and by special appointment.



180 Bayberry Lane, Westport, CT 06880-2855

Tel. 203.227.9571

Fax: 203.221.7199

Website: www.WWHD.org