



Health and Community Services

## **H1N1 Influenza A: Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is H1N1 Influenza A Virus?**

This is a strain of the influenza virus that usually affects pigs, but which may also make people sick.

H1N1 Influenza is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal flu. The symptoms include fever, fatigue, lack of appetite, coughing and sore throat.

Some people with H1N1 Influenza A have also reported vomiting and diarrhea. Some of the more severe cases have included severe respiratory distress and have needed mechanical ventilators to assist breathing.

### **How is H1N1 Influenza A Spread?**

Influenza and other respiratory infections are transmitted from person to person via the respiratory route. Coughs and sneezes release the germs into the air where they can be breathed in by others. Germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands and transmitted to the respiratory system when someone touches their mouth and/or nose.

### **What are the Symptoms of H1N1 Influenza A?**

The symptoms of H1N1 Influenza A in people are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza and include high fever, cough, headache, general aches, fatigue, eye pain, shortness of breath, and lack of appetite. Some people with H1N1 Influenza A have also reported runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

### **What is the incubation period for H1N1 Influenza A?**

Typically, incubation period for influenza is between two and seven days. We have no evidence to suggest that this influenza virus is any different, but this is a new virus and we continue to learn more about it and how it spreads.

### **How can H1N1 Influenza A be prevented?**

You can reduce the risk of getting H1N1 Influenza A or spreading it to others by taking standard precautionary measures:

- Wash your hands regularly, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Or cover your cough or sneeze with the crook of your arm.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, as germs can spread that way.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid shaking other people's hands.
- If you get sick, stay at home and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

### **Can people catch H1N1 Influenza A from eating pork?**

No. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You can not get H1N1 Influenza A from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork or eating pork products is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F (70°C) kills the virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

### **When should I see a doctor?**

If you have been to a country where H1N1 Influenza A in humans is being reported and you have symptoms of a new respiratory illness with fever, you should contact your doctor to discuss your symptoms. Make sure to tell your doctor about your travel history.

### **What medications are available to treat H1N1 Influenza A infections in humans?**

Currently antiviral drugs prescribed by doctors can be used for early treatment of the illness, if deemed necessary by your physician.

### **Is there a vaccine for H1N1 Influenza A?**

There is no vaccine to protect people from H1N1 Influenza A. However, the seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for individuals to offer protection against the seasonal strains that may be circulating, regardless of whether a new strain has emerged.

Canada has a plan and contract with a manufacturer to research and produce a vaccine for an influenza pandemic virus once it is identified, so production can start as soon as possible.

### **Will the Government be issuing any travel advisories?**

The Public Health Agency of Canada issues travel advisories and warnings. To view the latest travel warning and for further information visit the Public Health Agency of Canada (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/2009/hsf-mexico-090427-eng.php>)

### **Where can I get updates on the current status of the H1N1 Influenza A outbreak?**

Information on H1N1 Influenza A will be posted to the [Department of Health and Community Services](#) website regularly. For information on the national or international status you can visit the following sites:

Public Health Agency of Canada (<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>)  
World Health Organization (<http://www.who.int/en/>)

Adapted from materials by the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and the Public Health Agency of Canada