

Pandemic H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) for Parents: What You Should Know

What is Pandemic H1N1 flu (formerly known as swine flu)?

Pandemic H1N1 flu is a respiratory infection caused by a new flu virus responsible for outbreaks in many parts of the world. It has led to many hospitalizations and some deaths in parts of the United States.

Is Pandemic H1N1 flu the same as the seasonal flu?

No. Every year, different strains of flu viruses spread in our communities and cause the seasonal flu. The Pandemic H1N1 flu is caused by a new strain of flu virus that first appeared in the United States in the spring of 2009. Both the Pandemic H1N1 and seasonal flu can be serious.

How is Pandemic H1N1 flu spread?

Flu viruses are usually spread from person-to-person through droplets from a sick person's cough or sneeze. However, your child can also become infected with the flu by touching their eyes, nose, or mouth after touching a surface such as a table, faucet or doorknob that has been contaminated by the flu virus.

How serious is Pandemic H1N1 flu for children?

Most children will recover from the Pandemic H1N1 flu without treatment. However, just like the seasonal flu, Pandemic H1N1 flu can lead to serious health problems for children, especially those at high risk for flu complications. The risk of complications is highest for children under 5 (and especially under 2) and children with underlying health conditions such as asthma, lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, and neurological and neuromuscular disorders. If your child is at high risk and develops flu-like symptoms, contact their healthcare provider immediately.

What are children's symptoms of Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Many of the symptoms of Pandemic H1N1 flu are the same as the symptoms of the seasonal flu. These include fever, dry cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and tiredness. Pandemic H1N1 flu can cause diarrhea, vomiting and more serious complications. Some children will not have a fever.

When should I seek emergency medical care for my child?

You should seek emergency medical care for your child if he/she has any of the following:

- fast breathing or trouble breathing
- bluish or gray skin color
- not drinking enough fluids
- severe or repeated vomiting
- not urinating or crying with no tears
- not waking up or not interacting
- not wanting to be held
- flu-like symptoms get better but then come back with fever and worse cough
- pain or pressure in the chest or stomach

How is Pandemic H1N1 flu treated in children?

Like with seasonal flu, lots of fluids and plenty of rest away from work or school are recommended. Give your child plenty of clear fluids (like water, chicken broth, sports drinks, and electrolyte drinks like Pedialyte®) to prevent dehydration. You may give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), or naproxen (Aleve®) – **NOT aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid)**. For more serious cases of the flu, your child's healthcare provider may prescribe an antiviral medication. This can make the illness milder, make symptoms last a shorter period of time, and prevent serious complications.

[> more](#)

Child's Age	Dos	Don'ts
5 to 18 years old	DO give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), or naproxen (Aleve®) for fever and body aches. They do not contain aspirin. Always check ingredient labels on cold and flu medications to see if they contain aspirin.	DON'T give children aspirin or products containing aspirin (like Pepto-Bismol®). These can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
4 years old and younger	DO ask your doctor before using over-the-counter medications (Children's Tylenol®, Children's Motrin®). Follow your child's healthcare provider's instructions exactly to make sure you're giving the right amounts.	DON'T give children aspirin or products containing aspirin. DON'T give children cough and cold drugs containing antihistamines.
2 years old and younger	DO use a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus. DO follow your child's health care provider's instructions for caring for your young child.	DON'T give children aspirin or products containing aspirin. DON'T give cough and cold drugs to children 2 years old or younger.

Should my child get vaccinated against Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Yes, getting vaccinated is the best way to prevent this flu. The vaccine for Pandemic H1N1 flu is made just like the seasonal flu vaccine that is recommended each year. Just like seasonal flu vaccines, Pandemic H1N1 vaccines are safe and effective. They will be first available to:

- Pregnant women
- People living with or caring for infants under 6 months of age
- Emergency medical services personnel and health care workers
- Children and young adults from 6 months through 24 years
- People aged 25 through 64 years with chronic medical conditions like heart or lung disease, asthma, diabetes, or weakened immune systems

The H1N1 vaccine will be available in two forms- nasal spray and shot (injectable). Talk to your health care provider to see which form of vaccine is right for your child.

What else can I do to protect my family from Pandemic H1N1 flu?

Simple, everyday tips can help protect you and your family from the flu.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water and/or use gel sanitizers.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth since germs spread that way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people. If you've been in close contact with someone with H1N1 flu, ask your healthcare provider whether you need treatment to reduce your chances of getting the flu.
- If you're sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever ends.

For More Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

(800) CDC-INFO or (800) 232-4636

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

California Department of Public Health

(888) 865-0564

www.cdph.ca.gov

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/H1N1>

Health Care Services: Dial 2-1-1

DPH Update Listserv: Email Listserv@listserv.ph.lacounty.gov

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10/25/2009

