

# Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Fact Sheet

## General Public



### What is novel influenza?

The novel flu virus, that is currently circulating in the U.S. and other parts of the world, is a unique combination of swine and human flu viruses. This virus is transmitted from person to person, not from pigs to humans. None of the current cases had exposure to swine.

### What are the symptoms of novel flu?

The symptoms of novel flu are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include **fever, cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea (runny nose), nasal congestion, body aches, headache, chills** and **fatigue**. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting along with respiratory symptoms. Like seasonal flu, novel flu may be more severe in those who have chronic medical conditions.



### How does novel flu spread?

The current novel influenza virus spreads the same way as seasonal flu. Flu viruses are spread by an ill person coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people can become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it (such as a door knob) and then touching their mouth or nose.

### How can I protect myself and my loved ones against novel flu?

- Avoid contact with ill persons.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or into your elbow (if you do not have a tissue). Throw used tissues in a trash can.
- After you cough or sneeze, wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- If you are ill, stay away from other people by staying home. Do not go to work, school, or travel while ill.
- If you have visited areas where novel flu cases have been confirmed and develop flu like symptoms within seven days after your return, it is important to contact your health care provider and be tested. Remind them to contact local public health officials. Visit [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu) for current list of areas with novel flu.

### How long can an infected person spread novel flu to others?

People with novel flu are potentially contagious as long as they have symptoms and possibly for up to 7 days after they become ill. Children, especially younger children, might be contagious for longer than 7 days.

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### **How long can viruses live outside the body on a surface like a doorknob?**

Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like cafeteria tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent handwashing or using an alcohol based hand gel will help you reduce the chances of becoming ill after touching these surfaces.

### **Is there a vaccine for novel flu?**

Currently there is no vaccine to protect humans from novel flu.

### **Are there medicines I can take if I get sick with novel flu?**

Yes. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. They are usually used only for those at high risk of becoming seriously ill. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of when your symptoms start).

### **Can I get some antiviral drugs to keep at home, just in case I get sick?**

No. You should not ask your healthcare provider for antiviral medication to keep at home “just in case”. If many people did this, it would mean less antivirals available for those who do get sick.

### **Can I get novel influenza from eating or preparing pork?**

No. This novel influenza virus is not spread by food. You cannot get this novel influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.