

How to Stay Home Safely

Revised August 9, 2009

These guidelines will be revised as the situation evolves.

The new type of influenza, H1N1 influenza (sometimes called swine flu) in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. So far in the United States and most countries, mild to moderate disease has occurred. Almost all people in Texas with confirmed H1N1 flu (swine flu) have had a fever (50% had a temperature greater than 102.5°F) and cough; most have also had a sore throat. Almost everyone has stayed home and recovered in a few days. Symptoms of H1N1 flu are expected to be similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal influenza (see box).

Symptoms

- fever, very tired, cough, sore throat, headache, runny nose, lack of appetite; some may have GI symptoms (nausea, diarrhea, vomiting)

Symptoms of influenza tend to be mild and usually last 3 to 4 days. In most cases H1N1 flu will resolve without medical attention. Sometimes pneumonia, ear infection, or sinus infection may occur at the same time as or after the flu. Some people have additional risks for developing severe complications with flu (see box). **Most illnesses with congestion and mild fever are NOT caused by this new type of flu.**

At Risk for Complications

- Children younger than 5 years old. The risk for severe complications from seasonal influenza is highest among children younger than 2 years old,
- Pregnant women,
- Adults 65 years of age and older,
- Adults and children with certain chronic medical conditions including chronic lung problems such as asthma, heart (except high blood pressure), liver, blood (including sickle cell), nervous system, muscular, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes),
- Adults and children who have immunodeficiency or immunosuppression caused by medications such as corticosteroids and chemotherapy, or diseases such as HIV/AIDS, adrenal disease, or lupus,
- Children younger than 19 years who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection,
- Persons in nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities

What You Can Do to Stay Healthy: PREVENT AND PREPARE!

- **Take everyday actions to stay healthy.** You know what these are: getting enough sleep, eating well, avoiding stress, and drink plenty of fluids.
- **Cover your cough.** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you do not have a tissue handy, sneeze or cough into the inside of your elbow. Your elbow rarely touches anything else.
- **Clean your hands often.** Soap and water is preferred, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective and should be used when you can't wash your hands. You can find this type of cleanser just about anywhere. It comes in different sizes that fit on your desk, car, purse, or pocket.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread that way- you can infect yourself.
- **Stay home when you are ill.** Do not send your children to school when ill.
- **Follow public health advice.** Your local public health department will be looking at ways to reduce opportunities for exposure and to prevent infection, such as encouraging vaccination.
- **Develop a family emergency plan as a precaution.** This should include storing a supply of food, medicines, facemasks, alcohol-based hand rubs and other essential supplies. Remember your pet's needs.
- **Stay Informed:** Check the following websites often for information.
 - CDC website: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu
 - DSHS website: www.texasflu.org.
 - Call 1-800-CDC-INFO to reach the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more information.

What you should do if you think you have H1N1 Influenza:

- **Stay home if you get sick.** Public Health recommends that you stay home from work, school, errands, and limit close contact with others to keep from infecting them. Stay home until there has been no fever (>100°F) for 24 hours, without fever reducing medications. If you are a healthcare worker or if most of the people in your workplace are at high risk of complications from flu, then stay home for 7 days or until your symptoms are gone, whichever is longer.
- In most cases H1N1 flu will resolve without medical attention.
- **Tips to get healthy:**
 - get plenty of rest
 - take acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or other fever reducing medicines as needed. **DO NOT give aspirin** or aspirin containing products to children and youth under 18 years old, to avoid Reyes Syndrome, a potentially life-threatening complication.
 - drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
 - If medications are prescribed, be sure to follow instructions exactly. If you think you are having a reaction to the medication, report it to your health care provider immediately.
- **If you are at risk for complications of flu or sick, call your health care provider.** Report your symptoms, and follow their advice. For mild symptoms, try not to call your healthcare provider or visit the hospital emergency room. **IF SEVERE SYMPTOMS DEVELOP (see box), CALL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER. IF THE HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IS NOT AVAILABLE, GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.**

Severe Symptoms:**For Adults:**

- has difficulty breathing
- has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, has not urinated in 4 hours
- has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- has loss of consciousness
- has an alteration in thinking or behavior

For Children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids; or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- 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

- Collect all the information the healthcare provider will need to decide what kind of care you need including:
 - a list of symptoms, and how long you have had the symptoms
 - a list of your current medications
 - a list of your current health problems
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention. **IF YOU HAVE SEVERE SYMPTOMS, SEEK HEALTH CARE IMMEDIATELY.**

For more information on caring for an ill person at home, see the CDC website:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm

Remember to Prevent and Prepare in order to get healthy and stay healthy!