

Fact Sheet

This information must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care provider before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

H1N1 Flu Virus

What is H1N1 flu virus?

H1N1 flu virus is a respiratory illness. Symptoms are similar to regular flu symptoms and include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and possibly nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. In some people, influenza can lead to pneumonia, hospitalization and in rare cases, death.

Who is most at risk from H1N1?

Most healthy people recover from the flu without complications. Younger children are most at risk of becoming infected. Although not at increased risk of catching the flu, pregnant women and individuals with pre-existing chronic disease are at an increased risk of more severe illness if they become infected. It is important for these groups to contact their health care provider as soon as possible if they become ill with symptoms of influenza.

How does the influenza virus spread?

The virus is spread from person to person. Coughs and sneezes release the flu virus into the air where it can be breathed in directly by others within 1.8 metres/six feet. The virus can also live on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs where it can be picked up on hands and transmitted when you touch your mouth, eyes or nose.

How can I reduce my risk of getting the flu?

Follow these steps to reduce the risk of getting the flu:

- Get immunized when the vaccine becomes available
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds or clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and wash or sanitize your hands afterwards
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm - NOT your hands
- Don't share objects that might transmit flu virus such as utensils and drinking cups, musical instrument mouthpieces, water bottles, etc.
- Watch for flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches and possibly vomiting or diarrhea
- Stay home if you are feeling ill
- Stay well rested, be physically active, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food

Teach children about the importance of washing their hands by watching this video online:

Lather, Rinse, Defeat Germs toronto.ca/health/cdc/clean_hands/clean_hands_video.htm

Will schools or workplaces be closed if there is a case of H1N1 flu virus identified or suspected?

Toronto Public Health is currently advising that schools or workplaces should not close if a case is identified, just as they would not close when there are cases of seasonal flu.

Fact Sheet

What should I do if I have the flu?

If you or a family member has flu-like symptoms – such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches, fatigue, severe headache, sore throat, lack of appetite - stay away from work, school and public places.

For moderate symptoms – such as worsening cough, fever, fatigue, muscle aches, etc – see a doctor.

For mild symptoms – stay home. Get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids (avoid dehydration), limit contact with friends and household members, ensure family members wash their hands often and clean frequently-touched surfaces. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help reduce the fever.

When should I seek emergency medical care?

If you have flu-like symptoms and are unable to get to your doctor or see a health care provider, go to a hospital emergency room if you have any of the symptoms listed below.

Infants and Children	Adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fever in infants less than 3 months• fever with rash• fast or troubled breathing• purple or blue discoloration of the lips or skin• drinking very little fluid and urinating less than usual• difficulty waking up or confusion• irritability - child does not want to be held• seizures (convulsion/fit) or stiff neck• flu-like symptoms improve then return with fever and/or worsening cough• underlying health condition that worsens	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• difficulty breathing or shortness of breath• chest pain• severe or persistent vomiting• fever that lasts for more than 2 days• confusion or difficulty waking up• sudden dizziness• flu-like symptoms improve then return with fever and/or worsening cough• underlying health condition that worsens

Are there any medications available to treat this flu?

Get immunized when the vaccine is available. Antiviral medications are prescribed by a doctor but are only recommended for people who have moderate to severe flu symptoms or a medical condition that increases their risk of more serious health complications.

How do I keep surfaces clean to prevent the spread of influenza?

Common household disinfectants will kill the virus on household items and surfaces. Mixing one teaspoon of bleach with two cups of water makes a solution that will kill the virus.

Will the seasonal flu shot protect me from H1N1?

The regular seasonal flu shot will protect you against seasonal flu. This year's seasonal flu shot will not protect you against H1N1 flu virus. More information about free clinics for both the H1N1 flu shot and seasonal flu, visit toronto.ca/health.

Where can I get more information?

Toronto Public Health:

toronto.ca/health or 416-338-7600

TeleHealth Ontario:

1-866-797-0000.

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care:

health.gov.on.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada:

phac-aspc.gc.ca or 1-800-454-8302