



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Linn County Public Health

501 13th Street NW

Cedar Rapids, IA 52405-3700

Ph: (319) 892-6000 Fax: (319) 892-6099

www.linncounty.org or email health@linncounty.org



Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus Fact Sheet ~ General Public

What is Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus?

The Novel Influenza A (H1N1) 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 H1N1?

The symptoms of H1N1 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, H1N1 may be more severe in those who have chronic medical conditions.

How does H1N1 spread?

The current H1N1 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 surfaces with flu viruses (such as a door knob) and then touching their mouth or nose.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 to others?

People with H1N1 are 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. Any person suspected of having influenza should not go to work, school or other mass gathering areas until he/she is free of fever without fever reducing medication.

How can I protect myself and my loved ones against H1N1?

- 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.
- Frequently wash hands with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizer if hand washing with soap and water is not possible.
- If you think you are ill with flu, avoid close contact with others as much as possible. Stay at home. Seek medical care if you are severely ill (such as having trouble breathing). Do not go to work, school, or travel while ill.

Will my seasonal flu vaccine protect me from H1N1?

No, the seasonal flu vaccine will not protect you from H1N1.

Is there a vaccine for H1N1?

Vaccines are being manufactured for the prevention of novel influenza A (H1N1).

Where can I get H1N1 vaccine?

Federal vaccine supplies will be distributed to the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). In turn, IDPH will distribute to Linn County Public Health with specific expectations regarding priority population groups that are intended to receive the vaccine. A local planning group is established and is working on distribution measures. It is expected that vaccine may be available late fall.

Are there medicines I can take if I get sick with H1N1?

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.

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

In general, Influenza A virus can survive in the environment for several hours, depending on environmental factors like temperature, humidity, exposure to sunlight, etc. It is important to regularly and routinely disinfect potentially contaminated surfaces to minimize potential exposures.

Can I get H1N1 from eating or preparing pork?

No. H1N1 virus is not spread by food. You cannot get this H1N1 from eating pork or pork products.

Additional resources for the Linn County Community:

- www.linncounty.org/health
- www.flu.gov
- <http://www.ready.gov>
- <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

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