

## PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, & COMMUNITY BY STAYING INFORMED ABOUT NOVEL H1N1 INFLUENZA...

Novel influenza A (H1N1) is a new flu virus of swine origin that was first detected in April, 2009. The virus is spreading from person-to-person, and has sparked a growing outbreak of illness in the United States with an increasing number of cases being reported internationally as well. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) expects that illnesses may continue for some time. As a result, you or people around you may become ill. If so, you need to recognize the symptoms and know what to do.

The symptoms of this new H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this new H1N1 virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. The high risks groups for novel H1N1 flu are similar to those for seasonal flu. People at higher risk of serious complications from seasonal flu include people age 65 years and older, children younger than 5 years old, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who are taking medications that lower the immune systems response.

If you become sick, the illness may last for a week or longer. You should stay home and avoid contact with other persons, except to seek medical care. If you leave the house to seek medical care, wear a mask or cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. In general you should avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness. At the current time, CDC believes that this virus spreads in the same way as the seasonal flu viruses. With seasonal flu, studies have shown that people may be contagious from the day before they develop symptoms up to 7 days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

Treatment is available for those who are seriously ill. If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. However, it is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care.

To prevent the spread of H1N1 flu use good hygiene practices. **Stay informed** by visiting the CDC H1N1 Flu Website, [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/). This website is updated regularly by health officials who provide information as it becomes available. Because having accurate and reliable information is critical during a pandemic, you may use other national and local media, such as, listening to the radio station, watching the news reports on television, reading the newspaper, visiting/printing web-based information from credible websites, and talking with your health care provider and public health officials. Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information.

Influenza is spread mainly person-to-person through coughing and sneezing of infected people, therefore, people are urged to take actions to stay healthy. **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, cover your nose and mouth with your upper sleeve or elbow (not your hands). **Wash your hands** often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs spread easily this way. **Try to avoid close contact with sick people.** If you are sick with a flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you **stay home** from work or school and **limit contact with others** to keep from infecting them. Follow **public health advice** regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social measures. Find healthy ways to **deal with stress and anxiety.**

It is always a good idea to practice good health habits. Eat a balanced diet consuming a variety of foods, including vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products. Also include low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans. Drink lots of water and go easy on the salt, sugar alcohol, and saturated fat. Exercise on a regular basis and get plenty of sleep.

There is no vaccine available at this time for novel H1N1 flu, so it is extremely important for everyone to take these steps in preventing the spread of this virus to protect yourself, your family, and community. For more information about the H1N1 flu, please call the CDC, 1-800-CDC-INFO, or the CARE LINE, a toll-free number that North Carolinians can use to get answers to their questions. The CARE LINE number is 1-800-662-7030. You may also get information by contacting your local health care provider or local public health department: Jessica Farley at 828-733-6031 for the Avery County Health Department; Jessica Farley at 828-688-2371 for the Mitchell County Health Department; Jana Bartleson or Penny Bailey at 828-682-6118 for the Yancey County Health Department.