

Information about H1N1 (Swine Flu)

Last Updated Monday, 26 October 2009

Dr. Morris understands there is much concern about the swine flu. This particular type of influenza is a new variety. Because Dr. Morris doesn't have experience or research on this type of the flu, he is relying on the opinion of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, whose experts have been studying this infection since its outbreak this spring. Below is general information and guidance from the CDC. If you have flu symptoms and are scheduled to come to the office for an appointment we ask that you call first. Depending on the urgency of your scheduled visit, we may opt to reschedule your appointment to a different day or to a different time of the day to avoid spread of the flu to other patients. We may ask that you wear a mask as well to prevent the spread of the virus.

H1N1 influenza, or swine flu, is a respiratory illness caused by type A influenza viruses. H1N1 flu is contagious and is currently spreading between people around the world. The virus is spread by coughing or sneezing or by touching something with the virus on it then touching your mouth, nose or eyes. A person may be able to infect another person one day before getting symptoms and for 7 or more days after becoming sick.

How do I know if I have the flu?

You may have the flu if you have some or all of these symptoms:

-
fever*

-
cough

-
sore

-

runny
or stuffy nose

-
body
aches

-
headache

-
chills

-
fatigue

-
sometimes
diarrhea and vomiting

*It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.

What should I do if I think I have H1N1 flu?

If you get sick with flu-like symptoms this flu season, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people to avoid spreading the disease.

Most people with H1N1 have had mild illness and have not needed medical care or antiviral drugs and the same is true of seasonal flu. However, if you are pregnant or have other chronic conditions such as asthma, cancer, blood disorders, diabetes, kidney disease, neurological or neuromuscular diseases or have AIDS you are at high risk for complications and you should contact your primary care provider or your OB doctor for evaluation and possible treatment.

Are there medicines to treat 2009 H1N1?

Yes. There are drugs your doctor may prescribe for treating both seasonal and 2009 H1N1 called antiviral drugs. These drugs can make you better faster and may also prevent serious complications. This flu season, antiviral drugs are being used mainly to treat people who are very sick, such as people who need to be hospitalized, and to treat sick people who are more likely to get serious flu complications. This includes pregnant women.

****Pregnant**

women are more likely to get serious flu complications. The CDC is recommending that pregnant women be treated with these antiviral medications.**

If you are pregnant and have flu symptoms call your primary care doctor or your OB doctor right away. Your primary health care provider or OB doctor will decide whether antiviral drugs are needed to treat your illness.

Additionally, if you are pregnant and have been in close contact with someone who has flu symptoms you should call your primary care or OB doctor right away. Sometimes, doctors will give a pregnant woman an antiviral medicine to decrease the chance that she might become sick with flu. Other times, this might not be needed. The doctor may instead recommend that a pregnant woman take antiviral medicines only if they get sick.

Do I need to go the emergency room if I am only a little sick?

No. The emergency room should be used for people who are very sick. You should not go to the emergency room if you are only mildly ill. If you have the emergency warning signs of flu sickness (see below), you should go to the emergency room. If you get sick with flu symptoms and are at high risk of flu complications (pregnant) or you are concerned about your illness, call your primary health care provider for advice.

Emergency Warning Signs In adults:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

If you have these signs DO go to the emergency room!

How long should I stay home if I'm sick?

CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other things you have to do and no one else can do for you. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine, such as Tylenol®.) You should stay home from work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

What should I do while I'm sick?

- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making them sick. If you must leave home, for example to get medical care, wear a facemask if you have one, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.)
- Keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick.
Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated.
- Dishes can be done in dishwasher or with hot soapy water.

- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Have everyone in the household wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. *
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.

References:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Home Care Guidance, Retrieved 9/25/09 from <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, What to do If You Get Sick: 2009 H1N1 and Seasonal Flu, retrieved 9/25/09 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Use of Antiviral Medicines for the Treatment and Prevention of Flu Among Pregnant Women for the 2009-2010 Season, retrieved 9/25/09 from: http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/pregnancy/antiviral_pregnant_qa.htm