



Iowa Department of Public Health

## **Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Fact Sheet**

### **What is novel H1N1 flu?**

The novel influenza A (H1N1) virus is a unique, never before seen strain of influenza virus. It is currently circulating in the U.S. and other parts of the world.

### **Why is there so much concern about novel H1N1 flu?**

Because this is a new virus, no one has immunity. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 can cause severe illness and even death; however, different groups of people may be at a higher risk of getting ill.

### **What are the symptoms of novel flu?**

- As with seasonal flu people can have a fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.
- Some people also have diarrhea and vomit.

### **Who is at most risk for being infected with novel H1N1 flu?**

- People aged 5-24

### **Who is at highest risk for having complications from the novel H1N1 flu?**

- Children younger than five years of age (highest risk among children less than two years)
- Pregnant women
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as heart, lung, kidney disease) **or** who are immunosuppressed (e.g., taking immunosuppressive medications, infected with HIV)
- Children (younger than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who may be at high risk for experiencing Reye's Syndrome after influenza virus infection
- People aged 65 years and older (people aged 65 year and older appear to be at lower risk of being infected with novel H1N1 flu, but those that do get sick are at increased risk of having severe illness)

### **How does novel H1N1 flu spread?**

- From person-to-person, just like seasonal flu.
- Flu viruses are spread by a sick person coughing or sneezing on or near another person.
- Sometimes people can become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it (such as a door knob) with their hand and then touching their mouth, eyes, or nose. This is one reason why hand-washing is so important.

### **What should I do if I become sick with novel H1N1 flu?**

- Stay home and keep away from others as much as possible. Do not go to work or school.
- You should stay away from others until at least **24 hours** after your fever is gone. (Your fever should be gone without having to use fever-reducing medicine.)
- If you need to travel for medical care or other emergencies, make sure you cover your mouth and nose with a mask if possible (cover coughs and sneezes with sleeve or elbow if no mask is available), and keep your hands clean while traveling.
- Most people will recover without needing medical care. Remember, do NOT give children aspirin when they might have the flu, and young children should not be given any flu or cold medicine without checking with their health care provider.
- If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

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

- **Clean** – clean your hands with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizing gel when water is not available.
- **Cover** – cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or elbow.
- **Contain** – contain germs by staying home when ill. Don't go to school, work, shopping or other outside activities while you are sick.

**Is there a vaccine for novel H1N1 flu?**

A vaccine is being developed and tested. It is hoped the vaccine will be available in October. In the meantime, all Iowans are urged to get their seasonal influenza vaccine, follow good hygiene practices, and follow recommendations for receiving the novel H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available.

**Can I get novel H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork?**

No, novel H1N1 flu virus is not spread by food. You cannot get it from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

**Where can I get more information about novel H1N1 flu?**

Iowa Department of Public Health [www.idph.state.ia.us](http://www.idph.state.ia.us), your local public health department, or your healthcare provider.