

THE FLU & YOU



Pandemic 2009 H1N1 Influenza -Top 10 Things You Need to Know!

1.) What is Pandemic 2009 H1N1?

Pandemic 2009 H1N1 (H1N1) is a new flu virus that was first detected, in San Diego, in spring 2009. It spreads just like the regular seasonal flu through coughs and sneezes. It can also be spread by handling infected objects and then touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Because of the worldwide spread of the virus, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic in June. H1N1 has been widespread throughout San Diego County and is still present. Until you are vaccinated, unless you were infected since the illness began in the spring, you do not have adequate immunity to this virus.

For more info: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/background.htm>

2.) How do I protect myself from H1N1?

The single most important action to protect against getting H1N1 infection is to get vaccinated. *(This will be especially important for those at higher risk for H1N1 complications such as pregnant women, children less than 5 years, and people with chronic medical conditions like asthma, heart disease, or diabetes.)* Limited doses of the vaccine first became available in early October with additional vaccine coming to San Diego over the coming months. There are five (5) basic preventive measures to follow:

- Obtain the H1N1 vaccine when it is available.
- Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizers, if soap and water is unavailable.
- Stay away from those who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Routinely clean commonly touched surfaces.

For more info on commonly asked questions about H1N1: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>

3.) When should I stay home?

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with others. It is important to know the symptoms of H1N1 influenza, which are similar to the seasonal flu. This includes fever of >100 degrees F, coughing, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Diarrhea and vomiting may also occur. The current CDC guidance is to:

- Stay home for 24 hours after fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If you have underlying medical conditions that place you at risk for complications from the flu, please contact your doctor and describe your symptoms. He/she will determine if you need to be seen and need antiviral medication.
- If you have no underlying medical conditions, but your symptoms become severe (i.e., very high fever of 103 degrees F or higher, trouble breathing, pain in chest), you will need to be seen in the emergency department.
- Persons with no underlying medical conditions and no severe symptoms should not need medical care and should stay home. You should return to work as per the guidance above. If your symptoms improve and then get worse again, you should contact your doctor or seek medical care. The recommendation for health professionals is still 7 days or until symptoms have gone away, whichever is longer.

For more info: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm>

4.) Can I get a vaccine for H1N1?

This flu season, you will need to be vaccinated for two different types of flu: one shot will be given for regular seasonal flu and an additional shot will be necessary to protect against H1N1 flu. One dose of H1N1 flu vaccine is recommended for persons 10 years of age and older, while two doses are still recommended for children 6 months to 9 years old. Individuals at higher risk for complications (i.e., pregnant women, children and young adults 6 months to 24 years old, adults 25 to 64 years old with chronic medical conditions), those who routinely care for those at higher risk (i.e., emergency medical service and health care workers), and household contacts and caretakers of infants younger than 6 months old should receive the vaccine first.

For more info: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/acip.htm>

5.) Who should be tested?

Because the H1N1 virus is widespread in San Diego County, routine H1N1 testing for the general public is not recommended. Testing is prioritized for hospitalized patients, fatal cases, and patients seen at locations that routinely monitor influenza for the County. Other special situations such as outbreaks in schools, correctional institutions, or facilities where large number of people live or spend time may also require *limited* testing.

6.) Are hand sanitizers better than hand washing?

Nothing can replace soap and water. Hand washing is one of the five (5) preventive measures to help prevent the spread of the flu. To practice good hand hygiene, follow the following steps:

- Wash your hands properly and often.
- Clean under the nails, between the fingers, on both sides of the hand, and around the wrist.
- Rub your hands together completely and thoroughly with soap and water.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds - or sing “Happy Birthday” twice.

If you do not have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based (62% alcohol) hand sanitizer; apply liberally and rub over hands and fingers until it dries.

For more info: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pdf/handwashing.pdf>

7.) What should businesses or organizations say to clients and/or the general public if asked about H1N1?

Everyone should become familiar with the CDC “Questions and Answers” document, as well as the County of San Diego Frequently Asked Questions document that has been developed to answer questions and/or inquiries from the general public about H1N1. It is important to read these documents so that appropriate and consistent messages are conveyed.

Everyone has a role to prevent the spread of the H1N1 flu. If your staff is asked about H1N1 flu, the primary messages should include the following:

- H1N1 is common in the San Diego community. To date it has been somewhat similar to regular seasonal flu, but different by disproportionately affecting young children and adults, and persisting through the summer.
- The best way to prevent against H1N1 is to obtain the flu vaccination when it is available in October or early November. People should also obtain the regular flu season vaccine as well.
- People should wash their hands often, stay home if they are sick, and cover their cough or sneeze.
- Refer clients or the public to San Diego 211 for more information or to the County of San Diego website at www.sdcountry.ca.gov.

For more info review the County of San Diego frequently asked questions (FAQ) document:

http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/Portal/News/swine_flu_cdc_sd.html and the CDC FAQ document at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>

8.) When are facemasks appropriate?

CDC does not recommend the general use of face masks at this time. Respirator N95 masks are recommended for healthcare settings and when caring for a person that is sick with H1N1.

For more information on the use of face masks in caring for a person ill with H1N1, click on the following link:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/masks.htm>

9.) How should I sanitize commonly used objects?

It is recommended to routinely clean surfaces and items that people frequently touch with their hands with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended. We all can play a role in decreasing the spread of H1N1 by keeping commonly touched surfaces clean:

- Keep surfaces clean by regularly (once daily or twice daily) wiping down and cleaning door knobs, tables, faucets and other commonly touched surfaces.
- Custodial workers should clean in the usual manner.

For more info scroll down to the “Contamination & Cleaning” section of the guidance on “H1N1 Flu and You”:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>

10.) Where can I find additional information about H1N1?

There are several reliable sources for content about H1N1 flu. Information can be obtained from the following federal, state, and local government resources:

- **FEDERAL:**
 - CDC Hotline: 1-800-CDC-Info (24 hrs/day 7 days/wk toll free)
 - CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- **STATE:**
 - CDPH website: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov>
- **LOCAL:**
 - 211 - County Hotline (24 hrs/day 7 days/week toll free)
 - County website: <http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/Portal/News/swineflu.html>