

Typical H1N1 flu symptoms

ALMOST ALWAYS: Fever, Cough

COMMONLY: Sore throat, Muscle ache, Joint pain, Headaches, Fatigue

SOMETIMES: Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea

The H1N1 flu virus is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the tiny droplets with the virus enter the nose, mouth, or eyes of another person.

The H1N1 flu virus is also spread by hand-to-hand contact with an infected person and after handling objects contaminated by infected people. The virus can also live on hard surfaces for a number of hours, long enough for a well person to transfer the virus to their body if they touch their mouth, nose or eyes.

Care Guide for individuals at home with H1N1 flu virus

Stay home – away from others.

- Anyone with H1N1 flu virus is estimated to be contagious for 7 days from the onset of the illness. Stay at home and limit unnecessary contact with others until your symptoms are gone and you feel well enough to return to work or school.
- Arrange for someone to take care of your children while you are ill.
- Take your temperature daily to track any fever.
- Get lots of rest, lots of fluids, and nutritious food to help the body get better.
- Maintain a smoke-free environment.
- Stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from others, preferably in a well-ventilated room.
- **The person with H1N1 flu virus should wear a simple surgical mask¹** when other people are in the same room, within 2 metres. This will control the spread of the virus filled droplets.
- Anyone with H1N1 flu virus should have their own towel, face cloth, toothbrush, etc. that are kept away from the belongings of others in the house.
- Line the garbage with a plastic bag, so that those who are well don't need to touch the contents.
- Disinfect hard surfaces (phones, keyboards, TV remote control, door knobs, light switches, etc) often with a household disinfectant. Disinfect the bathroom daily.

Treat the fever and cough.

- Cover a cough or sneeze by coughing or sneezing into your elbow or sleeve or using a tissue to cover your nose and mouth. Tissues should be carefully placed in a waste basket followed by washing your hands.
- If needed, take a mild cough suppressant, especially at night to help with sleep. It is not recommended to give children under 6 years old cough suppressant.
- Fever often comes with chills or aches and pains.
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen every 4-6 hours may help to bring down the fever and take away the aches. **Do not give aspirin to children with fever** as it has been linked to Reye's Syndrome, a potentially fatal disease associated with aspirin consumption by children with viral diseases. A cool face cloth to the face and neck or over the whole body can help the fever too.

- If antiviral medications have been ordered, ensure to take them as directed by your health care provider.

Be on the alert for complications

Most people will begin to feel better after a few days. However, be on the lookout for complications.

If the ill person experiences any of these additional symptoms:

- Shortness of breath at rest or when doing very little
- Rapid or difficulty breathing
- Extreme pain or pressure in the chest or stomach
- Vomiting that is severe or does not stop
- Confusion or seizure

Go for care at the EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT – RIGHT AWAY

If the ill person:

- Was feeling better, but then started feeling worse
- Is not getting better after several days
- Seems dehydrated – dark urine or few wet diapers
- Feeling very weak or dizzy

Go for medical care at the DOCTOR'S OFFICE OR CLINIC – TODAY

Call your health care provider or Health Links – Info-Santé 204-788-8200 for advice or if you are unsure where to go.

If you need to seek medical care, you should wear a surgical mask if available. This is especially important if you are using public transportation.

Tips on wearing a mask

- Make sure the mask fully covers your nose and mouth
- Replace the mask when it becomes wet or damp – a mask only works when it is dry
- Avoid touching your face while wearing the mask
- Do not let the mask hang around your neck – discard after use
- Remove the mask by only touching the straps and place the used mask directly into the garbage.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing the mask.

Others in the home – How can they prevent getting infected?

Wash their hands before they eat, and before touching their eyes, nose or mouth, and after touching anything that the ill person has touched (such as hard surfaces, dishes, towels, clothes, and trash).

Wash dishes, dirty laundry and towels with hot water and soap as soon as the items are removed from the ill person's room. Always wash their hands after touching any of the ill person's things.

Avoid touching their nose, mouth, or eyes. Keep their hands away from their face.

If the person with H1N1 flu virus can NOT tolerate a mask, **other people should wear a surgical mask AND safety glasses² when within 2 metres** of the ill person to protect their nose, mouth, and eyes. Use soap and water or a hand sanitizer to clean their hands before putting on and after taking off a mask.

¹ **Surgical masks** are quite inexpensive and can be purchased at your local pharmacy. If you do not have a mask, other options such as covering your nose and mouth with a bandana, could also provide protection (launder after use). Respirators (such as N95 masks) will not provide any more protection than surgical masks unless they are properly fit-tested.

² **Safety glasses** are available at all hardware stores; you could also wear wrap-around sports glasses.

REFERENCES: 1. Public Health Agency of Canada H1N1 Symptoms & Informtaion: "Taking care of a sick person" 3 May 2009, "Key Facts 16 Sep 2009"
2. WRHA "What to do Quick Guide" October 2009
3. Manitoba Health "H1N1 Flu Bulletin" October 2009