



## H1N1 Influenza Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the symptoms of H1N1 influenza infection?

The symptoms of the 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, headache, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of people also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. (However, vomiting and diarrhea without fever and respiratory symptoms are very unlikely to represent H1N1 infection. The term “stomach flu” is a misnomer and has nothing to do with influenza disease.) All of these symptoms are also symptoms of viral colds, so the main feature we use when considering a diagnosis of H1N1 infection is SEVERITY of symptoms: *high* fever, *severe* aches or fatigue, etc. Mild to moderate symptoms are either not H1N1 disease or represent a mild case of H1N1, for which the treatment is the same as for any other viral cold--symptom management.

### What should I do if think my child might have H1N1 infection?

The majority of people who have been sick with this virus in the U.S. have recovered at home without treatment. If your child has the symptoms discussed above, please keep him or her at home for seven days or 24 hours after symptoms resolve, unless given other instructions by our staff. If your child does not have severe symptoms (see below for severe symptoms), the most prudent action you can take is to stay home and not expose him or her to the illnesses in our waiting room or the emergency department. It is important that your child not be exposed to other children who are sick, and that if your child has a flu-like illness that he or she does not expose other people, in order to keep from spreading illness.

Aspirin or aspirin-containing products (e.g. bismuth subsalicylate – Pepto Bismol) should not be administered to any confirmed or suspected ill case of novel influenza H1N1 virus infection aged 18 years old and younger due to the risk of Reye syndrome. For relief of fever, we recommend using Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin/Advil (ibuprofen).

Children younger than 6 years of age should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a healthcare provider.

Check the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick) for more recommendations.

### What is the incubation period for H1N1 infection?

The time between exposure to H1N1 virus and development of symptoms is unknown but thought to be between 1 and 7 days (and probably only 1 to 4 days). Therefore, if you were exposed over a week ago to someone who came to be diagnosed with H1N1, it is extremely unlikely that you will develop H1N1 from that exposure.



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### Do we test for H1N1 influenza?

Unless a child has severe disease (see below) or a significant underlying medical condition (see below), current recommendations are NOT to test. This is because: 1) the tests for influenza are not very good and, 2) antiviral treatment (such as Tamiflu) is not recommended for patients who are unlikely to develop dangerous illness.

### Do we prescribe antiviral medication for patients with possible H1N1 infection?

Unless a patient has severe disease or a significant underlying medical condition (see below), current national recommendations are NOT to treat with antiviral medications such as Tamiflu. Most patients do not get better significantly faster with antiviral medications, supply of medication may become limited, and there is concern that the virus will become resistant to antiviral medication if these medicines are used too much.

### What are the severe symptoms that should make me seek medical care in the office?

Seek medical care if your child experiences any of the following warning signs/severe symptoms:

- Fast breathing
- Trouble breathing (not just coughing)
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Severe decrease in fluid intake
- Severe decrease in urine output
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or interacting as usual or other change in mental status
- Being so irritable (for more than an hour) that your child does not even want to be held
- Fever returns after being absent for a day, or a significant change in fever pattern occurs. For example, the temperature was 101°F for several days and now it is 103°F.

### What are underlying medical conditions that should make me more concerned about dangerous complications from possible H1N1 infection?

Certain children are at higher risk for complications from influenza infection. Children at higher risk include infants less than 6 months and all people with immune suppression, pregnancy, chronic kidney disease, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, asthma or other problems of the lungs (such as cystic fibrosis), sickle cell disease, and those on long-term aspirin therapy for chronic disorders. In addition, children with any condition that affects respiratory function including neurological conditions such as



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intellectual and developmental disability, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, metabolic conditions or other neuromuscular disorders have higher risk.

Children under age 5 (and especially those under age 2) have historically been at higher risk of complications in previous flu epidemics. This does not mean that all children under age 5 (or even under age 2) need to be seen for possible influenza. It means that children in this age group should be watched more closely for severe symptoms (see above) and medical care should be sought immediately if they develop those symptoms.

### What can I do to keep my family healthy this winter?

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. Put your used tissue in the waste basket.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. There are many studies in the medical literature that try to identify what prevents disease most effectively. The number one factor in these studies always turns out to be good hand washing.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you or your child gets sick with a flu-like illness, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.

If you would like more information on novel H1N1 flu, please visit the CDC website at:

[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general\\_info.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/general_info.htm)