

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)

Information for people in quarantine/isolation at home

11am, 15 May 2009

Introduction

You have been given this fact sheet as you have been asked to undertake voluntary quarantine/ isolation as you may have or have been exposed to H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu).

This fact sheet is intended to answer any questions you may have.

The illness

What is H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)?

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu). is a respiratory disease caused by a new influenza virus.

How does H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) spread?

Spread of H1N1 influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) virus is thought to be happening the same way seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing.

Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Is H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) contagious?

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)?

The symptoms of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) in people are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhoea and vomiting associated with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu). Severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported in some cases with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) infection. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How can someone with the flu infect someone else?

Infected people may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick.

This means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

What surfaces are most likely to be sources of contamination?

Droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person move through the air. Germs can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets from another person on a surface such as a desk and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as tables, doorknobs and desks. Frequent handwashing will reduce the chance of contamination from these common surfaces.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)?

DHS recommends the use of oseltamivir or zanamivir (Tamiflu or Relenza) for the treatment of infection with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) viruses.

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaler) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within two days of symptoms).

In certain circumstances these drugs are also used to prevent influenza developing.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) to others?

People with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) virus should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and for up to seven days following illness onset.

Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

Home quarantine

Stay at home until advised by DHS that quarantine is no longer required. No visitors are permitted during this time.

Sick people in quarantine

- If you are ill, it will be at least seven days after the start of the illness and when fever is gone before quarantine can be expected to end. DHS will be in frequent contact with you and will tell you exactly when quarantine will end.
- Keep other household members away from the sick person as much as possible. Avoid close contact (less than one metre away).
- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the home. If possible, they should not share a bedroom or bathroom. Keep the sickroom door closed.
- If possible have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person. Preferably, this should not be a pregnant woman, as they are at higher risk of complications from influenza.
- The sick person should not have any visitors other than caregivers. A phone call is safer than a visit.
- Treatments such as nebulisers or inhalers should be used in a separate room away from common areas and other people.
- Watch for signs that the sick person may need further medical attention: difficulty breathing, chest pain, blueness around the lips, inability to keep fluids down, becoming less alert or developing confusion.
- Keep the personal items of the sick person, such as towels, separate from the rest of the family.
- Remember not to share eating utensils, food or drinks.

Using facemasks

- Have the sick person wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other people.
- Wear a mask labelled P2 or N95 if you help a sick person with treatments such as a nebuliser or inhaler.
- A P2 or N95 mask fits snugly around the face, and filters out small particles that can be inhaled around the edges of a surgical mask. However, it is more difficult to breathe through a P2 respirator than a surgical mask.
- Used facemasks and respirators should be taken off and immediately placed in the rubbish so they do not touch anything else. Before and after you take off a facemask, wash your hands with soap and water.
- Avoid re-using disposable facemasks and respirators. Re-useable fabric facemasks can be laundered with normal laundry detergent and tumble-dried in a hot dryer.
- Facemasks and respirators can be purchased at a pharmacy or hardware store.
- Pharmacies may not stock P2 or N95 masks. Please try your local hardware store.

Well people in quarantine

Contacts of people confirmed with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu) may be required to remain in quarantine also. This is necessary as they may be able to spread flu to others, before they develop symptoms of infection themselves.

They should remain at home until advised by DHS that quarantine has ended. There should be no visitors aside from health care professionals for urgent health care needs. If health care professionals do need to visit your house, you must advise them that you are in quarantine.

Self care

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink clear fluids to avoid dehydration
- Maintain a normal diet if possible.

Protect other household contacts

There are a number of measures you can take to protect yourself and others from influenza. There is no vaccine available right now to protect against H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu).

Take these steps to protect your health:

Hygiene

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in a plastic-lined rubbish bin after you use it.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, scrubbing your wrists, palms, fingers and nails for 10–15 seconds. Rinse and dry with a clean, dry towel.
- After touching surfaces try not to rub your eyes or touch your nose or mouth, as this is how you may catch the virus.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Remember to keep the sick persons items separate to those who are well in the household.
- You should try to stay one metre or more from the sick person to reduce the spread of illness. If possible, the sick person should sleep in a separate room.

Cleaning, laundry and waste disposal

- Throw tissues and used facemasks in a plastic-lined rubbish bin immediately.
- Wash your hands after touching used tissues and masks.
- Wipe down surfaces such as bedside tables, bathroom surfaces and toys, with household disinfectant every day.
- Eating utensils, plates and glasses should not be shared, but can be washed with other similar things. Use hot water and detergent or a dishwasher.
- Sheets and towels can be washed with normal laundry. Hot tumble-drying is preferred, if available.
- Avoid 'hugging' dirty laundry before washing it, to avoid contaminating yourself. Wash your hands with soap and water after handling dirty laundry.

Assistance you might need

You should:

- Identify someone you could call upon for help if you become ill with the flu or are unable to leave the home. Make sure you discuss this with the person first.
- Identify someone who could help you with food and supplies if you and your family are ill. They will need to drop supplies at your front door prior to you opening the door.
- Keep the phone number of your family doctor and health information line in a prominent place.

Supplies you might need in quarantine

It is a good idea to have supplies of the following on hand:

- fluids (such as bottled water, juices, soups) and food to last you and your family a week
- basic household items (for example, tissues) to last a week
- plastic bags (used supermarket bags are good) to put used tissues in
- paracetamol and a thermometer in your medicine cabinet.

What to expect with the flu

Day 1–3: Sudden appearance of fever, headache, muscle pain and weakness, dry cough, sore throat and sometimes stuffed nose.

Day 4: Fever and muscle aches decrease. Hoarse, dry or sore throat, cough and possible mild chest discomfort become more noticeable. May feel tired, depressed or flat.

Day 8: Symptoms decrease. Cough, tiredness and mild depression may last 1–2 weeks or more.

When to seek medical attention

Watch for signs that sick person may need further medical attention: difficulty breathing, chest pain, blueness around the lips, inability to keep fluids down, becoming less alert or developing confusion.

It is important to seek medical attention as soon as these symptoms occur. If possible, ring the practice or hospital beforehand and advise them that you are in quarantine.

When a child is unwell

Older children and teens have the same flu symptoms as adults. Very young children and infants probably have similar symptoms, but may not know how to tell people they have sore muscles or a headache. These children may be irritable and eat poorly. They sometimes develop a hoarse cry and barking cough (like croup).

Younger children, especially those under six months of age may also have diarrhoea, vomiting and stomach pain. Some of the things you can do for your child are:

- Give paracetamol or ibuprofen for the fever in the dose recommended on the packet (unless your doctor says otherwise). Do not give aspirin containing medications. Your pharmacist can provide advice on appropriate 'over-the-counter' medications for treating fever.
- Do not expect to be prescribed antibiotics for uncomplicated influenza, as they will have no benefit.
- Antibiotics may be prescribed for complications of influenza such as pneumonia or ear infections.
- Dress the child in lightweight clothing and keep the room temperature at about 20 degrees Celsius if possible.
- Offer cool fluids frequently when the child is awake.
- Avoid cold baths.
- Allow the child to rest and stay at home until no longer infectious, so the virus isn't spread to other children
- As soon as you have wiped your child's nose throw away tissues in a plastic-lined rubbish bin.
- Teach the child to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue away in a plastic-lined rubbish bin.
- Wash your hands often and teach your child to do so after wiping their nose.

You should seek medical attention as soon as symptoms develop.

When you seek medical care, if possible, ring the practice or hospital beforehand to arrange assessment in the home.

Further information

For advice regarding health concerns, please contact Nurse On Call on **1300 606 024** (24 hours, 7 days).

DHS will be in touch with people in quarantine frequently.