



#### Special points to remember:

- On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced that a pandemic of 2009 H1N1 flu was underway. Since then, thousands of people have become infected with the virus.
- Handwashing remains the most effective method of protecting you and your clients from the spread of germs—including the H1N1 (swine) flu virus.

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This year's seasonal flu vaccine DOES NOT protect against the H1N1 flu.

# An H1N1 Fact Sheet

Just for You from In the Know!



## WHAT IN THE WORLD IS H1N1 FLU?

By now, you've probably heard a lot about the "swine" flu which is now known as the H1N1 flu. But doesn't the flu bug come around every year? Why is this one such a big deal?

Scientists studying the H1N1 flu virus have discovered that it is made up of a combination of genes from pig, bird and human flu viruses. This "triple whammy" virus is different from the seasonal flu that comes around every year.

H1N1 flu is easily spread from person to person in the same way that seasonal flu spreads—mainly through droplets that float through the air when infected people cough or sneeze.

Unlike the seasonal flu, which kills thousands of senior citizens every year, H1N1 does not seem to target the elderly. However, it does pose a high risk for people with underlying medical conditions including:

- Pregnancy
- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Suppressed immune system
- Heart disease
- Kidney disease

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF H1N1 FLU?

The symptoms of the H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu, including:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Runny or stuffy nose

- Chills
- Fatigue

In addition, some people have reported nausea, vomiting and diarrhea as part of the H1N1 flu. Serious cases of the disease can also lead to pneumonia and respiratory failure.

While most people with H1N1 flu have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT H1N1 FLU

- Keep in mind that the H1N1 virus can live for 2 to 8 hours on surfaces like tables, doorknobs and telephones. Some people may be getting sick by touching something contaminated by the H1N1 flu virus—and then touching their eyes, noses or mouths.
- It is possible for an infected person to spread the virus to others beginning 24 hours BEFORE symptoms show up. This means that you may have contact with an infected person who seems perfectly healthy. And, it means that you could spread the virus before you know you have it.
- The CDC recommends the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine for:
  - pregnant women,
  - people who have (or care for) infants,
  - healthcare personnel
  - everyone ages 6 months through 24 years of age.
- In addition, the vaccine is suggested for people who have a medical condition that puts them at risk for a serious case of the H1N1 flu.
- If you are caring for people with the H1N1 flu, watch for these warning signs that urgent medical attention is required:
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
  - Sudden dizziness
  - Confusion
  - Severe or persistent vomiting
  - Flu-like symptoms that improve BUT then return with fever and bad cough

The H1N1 flu virus is **NOT** spread through eating food (including pork), drinking water or by swimming in a pool with an infected person.

## PREVENTION & TREATMENT OF H1N1 FLU

You should consider getting the H1N1 vaccine as it becomes available in your area. In the meantime, there are some basic health habits that help prevent the spread of H1N1 germs. These include:

- **Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.** Then, dispose of the tissue in the trash.
- **Trying to minimize close contact with people who may have the flu.** Wear gloves, a mask and other personal protective equipment during client care, if necessary.
- **Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth while you are at work.**
- **Washing your hands!!** This is the number one way to protect your health—and the health of your clients. Follow your workplace policy for how and when to wash your hands. Waterless (alcohol-



*If you should get sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone! By keeping away from others, you'll help stop the spread of H1N1.*

based) hand cleaners are also effective against the H1N1 flu virus.

There are some prescription drugs (called anti-virals) that seem to work against the H1N1 flu. These include Tamiflu and Relenza. But, keep in mind, many people recover from the H1N1 flu *without* treatment.