



# Sutter County Public Health

Flu Season 2009



*"Smiling is infectious,  
you can catch it like  
the flu.  
Someone smiled at me  
today,  
And I started smiling,  
too."*

*Author Unknown*

## **SEASONAL FLU:**

~ INFLUENZA CAUSES AN AVERAGE OF **36,000 DEATHS AND 226,000 HOSPITALIZATIONS** IN THE U.S. EACH YEAR.

~ THE FLU VACCINATION **PREVENTS** FLU IN 70% TO 90% OF HEALTHY ADULTS YOUNGER THAN 65 YEARS OLD.

~ FLU VACCINE **DOES NOT** GIVE PEOPLE THE FLU.

~ IMMUNITY TO INFLUENZA VIRUSES ONLY LAST FOR A YEAR, SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO GET VACCINATED EACH YEAR.

**PLEASE PROTECT YOURSELF AND THOSE YOU LOVE FROM INFLUENZA...**

**GET YOUR FLU SHOT!**

## *H1N1: The Facts*

**Deborah Page, PHN, H1N1 Coordinator  
Sutter County Public Health**

2009 H1N1 flu (sometimes called "swine flu") is a new influenza virus that is spreading worldwide among people. Because this virus is very different from current seasonal influenza viruses, many people will not have protective immunity against it. The seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against it either.

### **How does 2009 H1N1 flu spread?**

Both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal influenza are thought to spread mostly from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of those who are sick with influenza. People may also get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it, such as door handles or shaking hands, and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.

### **How long can a sick person spread 2009 H1N1 flu to others?**

People infected with 2009 H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to about 7 days after getting sick. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems.

### **Who is at greatest risk of infection with this new virus?**

So far, younger people have been more likely to be infected with 2009 H1N1 flu than older people. Most cases of 2009 H1N1 have occurred in people younger than 25 years of age. At this time, there are relatively few cases of 2009 H1N1 in people 65 or older, which is unusual when compared with seasonal flu.

### **How do I protect myself from getting sick from 2009 H1N1?**

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a 3 step approach to fighting the flu:

1. Vaccination.
2. Everyday preventive actions (frequent hand washing, staying home when sick).
3. Antiviral drugs (if recommended by your doctor).

### **What should I do if I get sick?**

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms this flu season, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people except to seek medical care. Most people have been able to recover at home from 2009 H1N1 without needing medical care and the same is true of seasonal flu.

**"Emergency warning signs"** that should signal anyone to seek medical care **urgently**:

### **In Children:**

1. Fast breathing or troubled breathing.
2. Bluish skin color.
3. Not drinking enough fluids.
4. Not waking up or not interacting.
5. Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held.
6. Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
7. Fever with rash.

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# Today's Influenza

Robert T. Martin, RN, Infection Control and Prevention, Fremont-Rideout Health Group



*The influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 killed more people than the Great War, known today as World War I, at somewhere between 20 and 40 million people. It has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history. More people died of influenza in a single year than in four-years of the Black Death Bubonic Plague from 1347 to 1351. Known as "Spanish Flu" or "La Grippe", the influenza of 1918-1919 was a global disaster.*

*The effect of the influenza epidemic was so severe that the average life span in the US was depressed by 10 years. The influenza virus had a profound virulence, with a death rate for 15 to 34-year-olds of influenza and pneumonia were 20 times higher in 1918 than in previous years.*

*The pandemic affected everyone. With one-quarter of the US and one-fifth of the world infected with the influenza, it was impossible to escape from the illness. Those who were lucky enough to avoid infection had to deal with the public health ordinances to restrain the spread of the disease. Bodies piled up as the massive deaths of the epidemic ensued.*

*The origin of this influenza variant is not precisely known. It is thought to have originated in China in a rare genetic shift of the influenza virus. The recombination of its surface proteins created a virus novel to almost everyone and a loss of herd immunity.*

Influenza, more commonly called "the flu," is caused by the influenza virus, which infects the respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs). Unlike many other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, the flu can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people. The recent H1N1 influenza virus is a mutated version of a virus that has been found in the pig population for over a decade. Hence, the original name of "Swine Flu" that was used during the April-May outbreak.

Because Influenza is a respiratory illness, symptoms of flu include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches. With the H1N1 influenza virus, additional gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea have been reported.

Although the H1N1 virus has received a large amount of media attention, it hasn't proven to be any more severe than the seasonal influenza we are all familiar with. The vast majority of cases do not require hospitalization or treatment. Rest, fluids and medications for fever help most make a full recovery in a week.

The main way that influenza viruses are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. This can happen when droplets from a cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled (generally 3 to 6 feet) through the air and deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. Though much less frequent, the viruses also can be spread when a person touches respiratory droplets on another person or an object and then touches their own mouth or nose (or someone else's mouth or nose) before washing their hands.

However, the flu virus is rather fragile outside the body. Studies estimate the flu virus can only survive for up to 24 hours outside the human body, depending on the surface. On soft surfaces, such as furniture and clothing, the virus can only survive for a few minutes. Common household cleaners are sufficient in decontaminating surfaces. Special disinfectants are not required to kill the flu virus. Staying away from large, congesting crowds and hand washing are still the best defense from getting the flu.

Despite the large amount of media attention it has received, it is important to keep in mind that the H1N1 influenza virus is not a repeat of the 1918 "Spanish Flu." Although it has affected a large percentage of our population, the illness it causes is, in most cases, very mild.

## *Back to Basics*

Tara Crim, MPH, Program Specialist, Sutter County Public Health



The best way to prevent seasonal or H1N1 influenza is to stay healthy in the first place. Easier said than done.

With the H1N1 virus creating such a stir these days, it's important not to forget that we have a lot of control over whether we get sick or not. Prevention is simple – get back to basics with some natural flu fighting techniques.

### ◆ **Follow Hygiene Basics**

*The most important thing you can do to keep from getting sick is to wash your hands!!* Frequent hand-washing, covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing (with your elbow or a tissue), and sanitizing common areas (phones, keyboards, etc.) daily can prevent the flu from spreading and reduce the chance of contracting the infection. *(Effective and inexpensive disinfecting solution for cleaning: mix 1/4 cup bleach with a quart of water. Mix in spray bottle and use to clean hard surfaces)*

### ◆ **Get Enough Sleep**

Sleeps boosts the immune system and gives your body a chance to recover from everyday wear and tear. Six to eight hours of sound, uninterrupted sleep is essential - not simply for rest, but to give your body a chance to repair, refresh and reenergize itself.

### ◆ **Eat Healthy!**

Researchers are finding positive links between immune function and components in food. Fruits such as oranges, grapes, strawberries, and kiwis are rich in Vitamin C which is a natural flu fighter that helps form white blood cells, which in turn increases immunity.

Low-fat/fat-free milk and other dairy products, as well as whole grains, contain zinc, which helps to strengthen T-cells, our bodies primary defense against infections. In addition to zinc, yogurt and other cultured dairy products contain probiotics, beneficial bacteria which are said to have immune-boosting benefits.

Eat lots of plant-based foods. Translation: increase your fruit and vegetable intake! A diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains is not only loaded with vitamins and minerals, but is also high in antioxidants and phytonutrients which can boost the immune system.

Stay hydrated. Getting the proper hydration keeps mucous membranes soft and moist, preventing tiny cracks that allow viruses and bacteria to enter your system.

### ◆ **Get Moving!**

Aim for a moderate amount of exercise each day. Studies have shown that a session of moderate physical activity produces positive effects on the immune system. Doing 30 minutes of physical activity at least five times a week at a pace that gets you mildly out of breath is enough to increase the body's natural defenses. If you can't do 30 minutes at one time, break it into your two, 15-minute sessions throughout the day. It's never too late to start reaping the benefits of exercise and modest efforts go a long way.

### ◆ **Other immune-boosting strategies:**

Try to avoid or at least decrease your daily stress. Although it's hard to completely get away from stress in your life, it's important to make an effort to limit it's effect on your body.

Cut back on unhealthy habits, such as smoking and overconsumption of alcohol.

***Remember... Staying healthy means more than simply avoiding germs.  
When it comes to the flu, healthy bodies have an easier time fighting off infection.  
Be kind to your body and give it the natural immune boosters it needs to  
stay safe this flu season!***

# *Flu Facts - What Every Parent Needs to Know*

**Nindya Burhan, MD, Pediatrics - Sutter North Medical Foundation**



You know your child better than anyone. Stay in tune to how she is feeling and be aware of any behavior that's unusual for her. Many flu symptoms are similar, but knowing the differences between the seasonal flu and H1N1 can help you and your doctor best care for your child.

The season flu can cause fever, coughing and/or sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and/or body aches, chills, and fatigue. The H1N1 virus can cause symptoms similar to seasonal flu, but may be more severe and be accompanied by additional symptoms including vomiting and diarrhea.

When to call the doctor? It's often hard to know when to pick up the phone and call your doctor. In some situations you should immediately call your doctor to seek his or her advice. If your child shows signs of not drinking enough fluids, not urinating or no tears when crying, persistent vomiting, so irritable that your child does not want to be held, flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with a fever and worse cough - call your doctor. It is very important to seek emergency care if your child has bluish or gray skin color, has fast or troubled breathing or has not woken up or can't interact with you.

Educating yourself about the flu is an important way to help your child stay well. Please discuss these flu facts and any questions you may have with your doctor.

One of the best ways to protect your child from the flu is getting her vaccinated – for both the seasonal flu and H1N1. Your child will need a separate vaccination for the seasonal flu and H1N1. Vaccinate your child for the seasonal flu now along with the H1N1 vaccine. Both vaccines are available in mist and injection form and provide identical protection for your child. The vaccinations have been tested and are safe for children. The seasonal flu vaccine can be given in several ways. Speak with your doctor about these options and the one best for your child.

Remember that your school-age child is likely hearing and learning about the flu at school. She also may be picking things up from your personal conversations and even from things on TV. Find out what your child may already know and ensure she has the correct information about: washing her hands often and well – long enough to sing “Happy Birthday” twice, covering her cough in her elbow and keeping germs from spreading by not touching her eyes, nose or mouth.

Set a good example for your child by showing her how to follow simple stay-well tips. Get to know the signs and symptoms of the seasonal and H1N1 flu. Help prevent the spread of the virus by keeping your sick child home from child care, school or other public places if she shows symptoms of the flu. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's health please contact your doctor.

*H1N1: The Facts, continued from page 1*

### **In Adults:**

1. Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
2. Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen.
3. Sudden dizziness.
4. Confusion.
5. Severe or persistent vomiting.

**Be prepared** in case you get sick and need to stay home for several days. Have a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol based hand rubs, tissues, facemasks and other related items. This will help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious. The CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (except to get medical care or for other necessities). Additionally, your fever should be gone without the use of any fever reducing medicines.

**Stay away** from others if you are ill (as much as possible) to keep from making them sick. Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings. If you must leave the house (for example to see your doctor), wear a facemask if it is tolerable, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and wash your hands often to keep from spreading flu to others.

**Sutter County Public Health** encourages you to take these actions to remain healthy and to lessen the impact of influenza on you and your family. For more information please visit: [www.suttercounty.org](http://www.suttercounty.org).