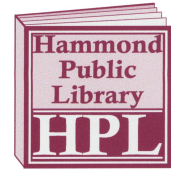


THE 2009 H1N1 FLU AND YOU



Information gathered from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. Presented by the Hammond Public Library.

WHAT IS A PANDEMIC?

An *epidemic* is when the incidence rate of a disease in a certain area substantially exceeds what was expected. A *pandemic* is when an epidemic spreads through the population of a large region such as a continent or the world. There are different phases of a pandemic.

- **Phase 1** - animal flu viruses showing no evidence of infecting humans.
- **Phase 2** - an animal flu virus is known to have infected humans in isolated instances.
- **Phase 3** - sporadic cases or small clusters of an animal-to-human infection are found, and limited human-to-human transmissions.
- **Phase 4** - community level outbreaks of either animal-to-human or human-to-human transmission of a flu virus.
- **Phase 5** - human-to-human spread of a virus into at least two countries in one region of the world.
- **Phase 6** - all the criteria of Phase 5 plus community level outbreaks in at least one other country in a different region of the world.
- **Post-peak period** - disease levels appear to decrease in most countries. Second or third waves of infection could occur returning status to Phase 6 in such cases.
- **Post-pandemic period** - disease activity will have returned to normal seasonal activity levels.

H1N1 vs SEASONAL FLU

Seasonal Flu is the virus that makes its way through the population each year around the same time. Most people have had seasonal flu at some time in their lives. Seasonal flu mutates each year, which is why every year its recommended you receive a flu shot for the new season's flu strains. The individuals with the highest risk of complications with seasonal flu include:

- ▶ children under the age of 5
- ▶ pregnant women
- ▶ anyone with a chronic medical condition
- ▶ people over the age of 65

The H1N1 flu virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because early lab testing showed that it had many genes similar to a virus that normally occurs in pigs (swine) in North America. More thorough testing, now shows that this new virus is very different from the ones found in pigs. Its new name is the 2009 H1N1 Flu. The individuals with the highest risk of complications with the 2009 H1N1 Flu include:

- ▶ people under the age of 25
- ▶ pregnant woman
- ▶ anyone with a chronic medical condition

It is believed by scientists that about one-third of the population over the age of 60 may already have antibodies to this virus, therefore they would be less likely to contract the new virus.

Most people who have become infected with this new virus have recovered without requiring medical treatment. The 2009 H1N1 Flu spreads the same way that seasonal flu spreads: through person-to-person contact or by touching something with the virus on it then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE FLU

The seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu are both transmitted in the same two ways. Either by human to human contact, or by touching an infected surface then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose. Here are some tips to help protect yourself and others from the spread of the flu:

- Wash hands regularly for 20-30 seconds with soap and warm water.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers if soap and water are not available.
- Clean commonly touched surfaces with your normal cleaning product (The flu virus can survive for 2 to 8 hours on surfaces).
- Cough or sneeze into disposable tissues. Use the elbow of your sleeve if no tissue is available.
- Avoid contact with sick people. If you are sick, stay home. It will reduce the risk of you transmitting it to others.
- When doing laundry, wash and dry in the hottest temperature possible. The high water and drying temperatures will kill the virus. And wash your hands after handling dirty laundry!
- Get a flu vaccination.

GETTING VACCINATED

The seasonal flu shot that is regularly available through most doctors offices and clinics is not effective against the H1N1 Flu. If you wish to be vaccinated against this new virus, you need to contact your doctor. Only a limited number of doses are available at this time, with more scheduled for the near future. Besides the traditional flu shot, there is a new nasal-spray flu vaccine that is made with a weakened form of the flu virus to help individuals build up antibodies to the new virus.

As with any vaccination, keep in mind that it will take 2 - 4 weeks before you will be protected against the virus. Discuss with your doctor any questions or concerns you may have with taking the vaccine as well as what to expect after getting a vaccine.

IF YOU GET SICK

Stay home! Do not go to work or school. By continuing to go into populated places, you risk infecting others. Most businesses will have policies in place for calling off work. Call your supervisor or follow your call off procedure.

You may also need to stay home to take care of one or more family members that are ill. Notify your work if this is the case. During a pandemic situation, most workplaces will be understanding in situations such as these and allow you to take time to care for yourself and your family.

Be aware that you can infect others. You can infect people from 1 day before you show the first symptoms until 5 to 7 days after getting sick. By following the previously mentioned protection tips you can help keep the spread of the virus to a minimum.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

Emergency warning signs in children:

- ▶ Fast or difficulty breathing
- ▶ Bluish or gray skin color
- ▶ Not drinking enough fluids
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Not waking up or interacting
- ▶ Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Emergency warning signs in adults:

- ▶ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- ▶ Pain or pressure in the abdomen or chest
- ▶ Sudden dizziness
- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Severe or persistent vomiting
- ▶ Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough