

Parents Guide to H1N1 or Swine Flu

What is H1N1 Flu (also known as Swine Flu)?

H1N1/Swine Flu is a viral infection of the upper respiratory system.

Can I get H1N1 Flu from eating or preparing pork?

No. H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. Human-Human spread of the H1N1 Flu is spread mainly through coughing and sneezing by infected people. (CDC)

Symptoms

A cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches, headache and fever (102-104 degree range). If you don't have a fever, **you don't** have H1N1 Flu.

How to know that your child has H1N1 Flu

If H1N1 Flu is widespread in your community and your child has a fever with flu symptoms (cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches and headache) then he or she probably has Swine Flu.

You don't need to call or see your child's doctor, unless your child develops a possible complication of the flu (see the "Call your child's doctor" section). You don't need to get any special tests.

Expected Course

The fever lasts 2 to 3 days, the runny or stuffy nose 1 to 2 weeks, and the cough 2 to 3 weeks.

Prevention of H1N1 Flu "The most important factor is prevention."

- Flu shots: When the Swine Flu vaccine becomes available, get all family members protected.
- Preventing Spread to Others: The virus is spread by sneezing, coughing, and hand contact. Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash the hands frequently. Stay home when sick. Your child may return to child care or school after the fever is gone for at least 24 hours. (CDC)

How to Treat H1N1 Flu

The treatment of H1N1 Flu depends on your child's main symptoms and is no different from the treatment for other viral respiratory infections. So far the rate of complications is no different than with regular Seasonal Flu. Bed rest is not necessary. **Antibiotics are NOT helpful.**

1. Fever or aches

Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever over 102°F (39°C) or for pain. Children and adolescents who have influenza should never take aspirin.

2. Cough

For children over age 6, give cough drops. If your child is over 1 year of age, give honey (1/2 to 1 teaspoon as needed). **Never give honey to babies.** Drugstore cough medicines are not as helpful as honey. Also, they are not approved for children under 4 years old (FDA).

3. Sore throat

Tylenol or ibuprofen is very helpful for throat pain. Children over 6 years old can suck on hard candy. Children over 1 year old can sip warm chicken broth.

4. Stuffy or blocked nose

Saline (or warm-water) nose drops followed by suction (or nose blowing) will open most blocked noses. Use nasal washes whenever your child can't breathe through the nose. You can buy saline spray without a prescription. Saline nose drops can also be made by adding 1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) of table salt to 1 cup (8 oz or 240 ml) of warm water.

5. Antiviral medicine (such as Tamiflu)

The American Academy of Pediatrics and CDC recommend prescription antiviral medicines be used for all HIGH-RISK children (see #6) who come down with Swine Flu symptoms. **They improve the symptoms but do not cure the disease.** Most HEALTHY children with H1N1 Flu do not need antiviral medicine unless they develop serious symptoms (such as pneumonia). Antiviral medicines must be started within 48 hours of the start of flu symptoms to have an effect. They usually reduce the time your child is sick by 1 or 2 days. National supplies of antiviral medications may be limited.

6. HIGH-RISK children

Children are considered high-risk for complications if they have any of the following conditions: lung disease (such as asthma), heart disease (such as a congenital heart disease), diabetes, sickle cell disease, kidney disease, cancer or weak immune system conditions, diseases requiring long-term aspirin therapy, pregnant teens or healthy children less than 5 years old.

7. Expected Course

The fever lasts 2 to 3 days, the runny or stuffy nose 1 to 2 weeks, and the cough 2 to 3 weeks.

Call your child's doctor Now (night or day) if:

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Breathing becomes difficult or fast
- Dehydration occurs (no urine in 12 hours, dry mouth, no tears)

Call your child's doctor during the day if:

- Your child is in the HIGH RISK group
- Earache or sinus pain occurs
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- Cough lasts more than 3 weeks
- Your child becomes worse

Plan ahead:

- Discuss child care options with family members in the event your child(ren) become(s) ill