

Flu Q&A

Q. What is the H1N1 (Swine) Flu?

It is simply a new strain (or type) of influenza. It is also known as “swine flu.” The terms “flu” and “influenza” mean the same thing.

Q. What are the symptoms?

Symptoms are similar to the seasonal flu:

- Fever
- Headache
- Extreme tiredness
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults

Very much like the seasonal flu, the spread of the illness is via respiratory droplets. This means you can contract the illness from touching door knobs, furniture, utensils, etc, if someone with H1N1 coughed or sneezed in the area of those items, without covering their cough/sneeze. This is why hand washing is so important in trying to prevent the flu or other respiratory illnesses.

Persons are contagious 1 day before symptoms to 7 days after the onset of illness. Children may shed virus for longer periods of time.

Q. What should I do if I have symptoms?

- Stay home unless seeking medical attention.
- Get rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Children and teenagers may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) but they are never to take Aspirin. Children over 6 months may also take Ibuprofen.
- Call your physician for assistance. He or she may consider prescribing a medication called an antiviral which comes in a liquid, pill, or inhaled powder for some patients with certain health risk factors. This medicine works best if given within two days of getting sick.
- Come to an emergency facility only if you need it.
 - Examples of emergency warning signs in children include fast breathing, trouble breathing, bluish or gray skin, not drinking enough fluids, severe or persistent vomiting, not waking or not interacting, or being so irritable that child does not want to be held.
 - In adults, emergency warning signs are shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, and severe or persistent vomiting.

Q. Why would I have to wear a mask in my doctor's office?

Flu virus, like many viruses, is spread by droplets from someone's nose or mouth. The mask will help decrease the spread from an ill person as they cough, sneeze, or breathe. The mask must be worn over the nose and mouth to be effective.

Q. Should I be concerned that someone is wearing a mask in the office?

- It may be scary to see someone wearing a mask.

- Don't be scared. The mask is helping decrease the spread of viruses.
- We want to thank all of our patients that are helping us in the fight against the flu virus.
- The common symptoms of flu are listed above. However, there are other viruses that have the same symptoms.
- The only way to know for sure is to do a lab test. However, this distinction is not necessary for most patients as the viruses are treated symptomatically and do not require antibiotics.
- If you are worried about your or your family's symptoms, please call your physician.

Q. I have a fever and cough. Do I need to see my doctor? Do I need to get tested?

- There is no need to test everyone with symptoms of fever and cough.
- Most people with symptoms can be treated by staying home, pushing fluids, getting rest, and eating right. Call your physician for advice.
- There are some people that are at risk for more serious complications from the flu and should contact their physician if their symptoms seem to be more than a simple cold, They include:
 - Pregnant women
 - Children, especially under age 2 years
 - Persons with chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, blood, neuromuscular disease or have an impaired immune system because of HIV, cancer, or medications that lower their resistance to infection
 - Children under age 19 years on aspirin therapy
 - People with metabolic diseases such as diabetes mellitus
 - Residents of nursing homes or long-term healthcare facilities

Q. If someone in my home has H1N1, do I need to get tested?

- It is not necessary to test individuals living with someone who has H1N1. It is also not necessary to be tested if someone at your office or in your classroom has H1N1.

Q. Are there guidelines for visiting Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare facilities?

- Please do not visit any health care facility if you have flu symptoms.
- When a patient is hospitalized with influenza, it is strongly recommended that visitors are limited to those necessary for the patient's well being and care