



CATAWBA VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

H1N1 Flu Frequently Asked Questions

What is 2009 H1N1 flu?

2009 H1N1 flu is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. Most people do not have immunity to this virus, so it spreads quickly.

People with the flu spread the virus through coughing or sneezing near others. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, mouth, or nose.

Those currently at higher risk of serious flu-related complications from 2009 H1N1 flu include children younger than five years old, pregnant women, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease), adults and children who have a weak immune system, residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities and persons aged 65 years or older. See <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm> for more information about high risk groups.

What are the signs and symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu in people?

The symptoms of seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people include fever or chills AND cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting. Like seasonal flu, 2009 H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

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

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- *Fast breathing or trouble breathing*
- *Bluish or gray skin color*
- *Not drinking enough fluids*
- *Severe or persistent vomiting*
- *Not waking up or not 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*

Severe illness (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and deaths have been reported with 2009 H1N1 flu infection in some people.

How long should a person stay out of work if they have an influenza-like illness?

Workers who have symptoms of influenza-like illness (see above) should stay home and not come to work until at least 24 hours after their fever has resolved. You should plan now to allow and encourage sick workers to stay home.

When will it hit my community and how serious will it be?

The 2009 H1N1 flu influenza virus may affect different communities at different times and in different ways. The flu may make many more people sick than usual, or it may not. We will likely see a re-emergence or continued outbreak in communities as the regular 2009–2010 flu season begins this fall.

Why should small business owners plan for 2009 H1N1 flu?

Small businesses are especially susceptible to the negative economic impacts of a flu pandemic. An estimated 25 percent of businesses do not reopen following a major disaster, according to the Institute for Business and Home Safety. Planning from the outset can help offset business losses, and protect your business and your employees when this flu hits. Benefits of planning are:

- *Minimize disruption to business activities*
- *Protect employees' health and safety*
- *Limit the negative impact to the community, economy and society*

What steps should you be prepared to take when the H1N1 flu hits your community?

CDC recommends that sick people stay home and away from the workplace. The best way to slow the spread of the disease is to keep sick people away from well people, given that the 2009 H1N1 flu virus is a new virus and most people will not have prior immunity to protect them from acquiring infection. If sick people come to work, they may infect other workers, and this has the potential to lead to a high rate of absenteeism in the workplace.

Your business's actions should be tied to the extent and severity in your local area. Choose someone to be responsible for flu issues at the workplace. They should contact the local health department for guidance and monitor the level and severity of 2009 H1N1 flu illness in your business' community and region, and sign up for e-mailed updates from www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.