



Questions and Answers on H1N1 (Human Swine Flu)

(July 14, 2009)

1. What is H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza)?

H1N1 is a new influenza virus made up of a mixture of genes derived from human, pig and avian strains. It is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal influenza.

2. What are the symptoms of H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza)?

The symptoms of H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) include:

- Cough
- Fever
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Body aches/headache
- Eye pain
- Lack of appetite
- Vomiting and diarrhea (in children under 5 years of age)

3. How is the H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) virus spread?

Coughs and sneezes release the germs into the air where they can be breathed in by others.

Germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands and transferred to the lungs when someone touches their mouth and/or nose.

4. What is the treatment?

Home treatment with rest, fluids (like soup, juice, and water), fever reducing medication and washing your hands frequently with soap and water after coughing or sneezing are the steps to feeling better.

Because H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) is caused by a virus, antibiotics are not effective.

5. What should I do if I have symptoms of Influenza?

You should stay home from work, school, public places and other social settings. You should self-isolate yourself and avoid close contact with others for seven days after your symptoms started, or until 24 hours after your last symptom, whichever is the longest period of time. This is the time when the illness can be spread to others.

If a family member is ill, keep them at home and in an area of the home that separates them by at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other family members. This is called isolation.

6. What does isolation mean?

Isolation means keeping sick people away from healthy people and limiting their interaction with others to stop the spread of an illness. When isolated, you should stay away from others in your home; (ie. in a separate room in your house).

7. Should I see my health care provider if I have symptoms of influenza?

Most people can care for themselves or their family when they have influenza.

You can call the **Yukon HealthLine toll free at 811** from anywhere in Yukon for health care information or advice from a registered nurse anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The nurse will assess your symptoms and help you to decide how to care for yourself or your family.

If your symptoms worsen, the 811 nurse may recommend that you contact your healthcare provider.

Calling ahead to your health care provider will alert them to make sure that others in the clinic are not being exposed to illness. Physician clinics and community health centres may also be looking after patients who may be at a higher risk of illness if they became infected with influenza.

8. Will the Health Centre be closed if the nurse gets sick with the flu?

Each health centre has a contingency plan in place should a nurse be unavailable. A nurse sick with N1H1 influenza would be an example of when the contingency plan could be implemented. Every effort will be made to maintain health services in the community.

9. How can I prevent spreading or catching Influenza?

- Get your annual influenza vaccine.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water, or use hand sanitizer.
- Cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve.
- Do not share drinking glasses or eating utensils.

10. Is there a vaccine for H1N1 influenza virus?

At this time there is no vaccine available for H1N1 influenza virus, however production is beginning, and a vaccine is expected by the late fall. The Yukon government is making preparations for providing this vaccination when it is available.

11. Should I wear a mask?

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) does not recommend the wearing of masks by the general public as there is no evidence to show that wearing a mask will protect you from catching the illness. People often wear masks incorrectly, or contaminate them when putting them on and taking them off, which could increase the risk of illness.

If an ill person has to leave home then wearing a mask can help reduce transmission of the virus to others. Mask use and eye protection may also be helpful for care-givers attending to someone sick at home with the flu.

12. How is H1N1 influenza virus diagnosed?

People with mild symptoms generally do not require testing. If your health care provider feels your symptoms require further investigation, a nose or throat swab may be done and sent to the lab for confirmation. Other tests, such as bloodwork, may also be ordered.

13. Can I get antivirals if I have symptoms of influenza?

Generally, antivirals are not recommended for treatment of mild influenza.

14. How is Yukon monitoring for H1N1 influenza virus?

Dr. Brendan Hanley, the Yukon's Medical Officer of Health, has asked all health care providers to increase their monitoring for influenza-like illness.

Surveillance has been increased and frontline health care workers are actively looking for and reporting possible cases particularly when there is a history of travel to places experiencing outbreaks of H1N1 influenza virus or contact with a person who is sick with H1N1 influenza virus. Health care workers have been provided with detailed advice on how to manage possible and/or confirmed cases.

15. Can you get H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza) from eating pork?

No. Influenza is not transmitted in this way, and proper cooking of pork products would kill influenza viruses anyway. For general safety, make sure pork is cooked through, not pink in the middle. Use a food thermometer to confirm pork has been heated through to 71 degrees Celsius (160 degrees Fahrenheit).

16. If I have travel plans to areas where there are cases of H1N1 (Human Swine Influenza), what should I do?

If you are traveling to affected areas, you should do the same things you would normally do to protect yourself and others during normal influenza season. Get a yearly influenza immunization. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze, wash your hands frequently with soap and water or hand sanitizers and stay in your room (eg. Hotel) if you are sick, drink plenty of fluids and rest.

17. What does it mean that the World Health Organization has raised the pandemic alert to level 6?

Pandemic influenza is defined as a new influenza virus that spreads easily between humans. The H1N1 human swine influenza that has been identified is a new virus, with evidence of human-to-human transmission.

Investigation about this evolving disease is in place and is being examined to monitor the severity of the disease and respond to any changes.

It is important to understand that the Canadian government has been implementing an aggressive approach to this particular virus for the past several months based on information sharing and technical assistance between Canada, US, Mexico and the WHO.

Canada is a global leader in pandemic planning and continues to implement the overall pandemic plan for the health sector (Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan).

The country's advanced level of readiness is also due to close cooperation with provinces and territories and health professionals across the country.

With the escalation to Pandemic Phase 6, federal actions will be actively continued under the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan for the Health Sector.