

H1N1 Frequently Asked Questions

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What is 2009 H1N1 Flu?

2009 H1N1 flu is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. Most people do not have immunity to the 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 the 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 medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease), adults and children with weak immune systems, residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities, and persons aged 65 years or older. See www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qu.htm for more information about high-risk groups.

What are the signs and symptoms of 2009 H1N1 Flu?

The symptoms of 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 chronic medical conditions.

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

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in 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 interacting
- Being so irritable that he/she 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.

How long should a person stay out of work if he/she has 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 is gone. 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. This flu may make many more people sick than during a normal flu season, or it may not. We will likely see a re-emergence or continued outbreak in communities as the 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:

- Minimizing disruption to business activities
- Protecting employees' health and safety
- Limiting the negative impact to the community, economy and society

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

Where can I go for more resources?

More resources can be found online at www.flu.gov, a one-stop access to U.S. Government 2009 H1N1 flu, avian and pandemic flu information. Also visit www.ready.gov/business for help on preparing a business continuity plan.

Repurposed from the Homeland Security's *Planning for 2009 H1N1 Influenza: A Preparedness Guide for Small Businesses*.

This article is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussion or opinions be construed as legal advice. Readers should contact legal counsel for legal advice.