

# Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Fact Sheet



## WIC Clinics

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### **What is novel influenza A H1N1?**

The novel flu virus, that is currently circulating in the U.S. and other parts of the world, is a unique combination of swine and human flu viruses. This virus is transmitted from person to person, not from pigs to humans. None of the current cases had exposure to swine.

### **What are the symptoms of novel flu?**

The symptoms of novel flu are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include **fever, cough, sore throat, rhinorrhea (runny nose), nasal congestion, body aches, headache, chills** and **fatigue**. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting along with respiratory symptoms. Like seasonal flu, this novel flu may be more severe in those who have chronic medical conditions.

### **How does novel flu spread?**

The current novel influenza virus spreads the same way as seasonal flu. Flu viruses are spread by an ill person coughing or sneezing. Sometimes people can become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it (such as a door knob) and then touching their mouth or nose.

### **How can I protect myself and my loved ones against novel flu?**

- Avoid contact with ill persons.
- When you cough or sneeze, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sneeze into your elbow (if you do not have a tissue). Throw used tissues in a trash can.
- After you cough or sneeze, wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- If you are ill, stay away from other people by staying home. Do not go to work, school, or travel while ill.
- If you have visited areas where novel flu cases have been confirmed and develop flu like symptoms within seven days after your return, it is important to contact your health care provider and be tested. Remind them to contact local public health officials. Visit [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu) for a current list of areas with novel flu.

**How long can an infected person spread novel flu to others?** People with novel flu are potentially contagious as long as they have symptoms and possibly for up to 7 days after they become ill. Children, especially younger children, might be contagious for longer than 7 days.

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### What should be done to prevent or reduce the spread of novel flu in WIC clinics?

- ✓ **Stay home when sick.** Any staff, WIC client or child suspected of having novel flu should not attend WIC clinics.
  
- ✓ **Wash hands often.** Wash hands frequently using soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds (this is generally around the time it takes to sing the ABC's). Dry hands with paper towels or automatic hand dryers, if possible. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and paper towels are always available.
  
- ✓ **Wash after wiping noses.** Proper hand washing is particularly important after wiping your own or someone else's nose, or after contact with drool, saliva or nose drainage.
  
- ✓ **Throw away tissues.** Influenza can be spread from coughs or sneezes. Make sure tissues are available for runny noses and sneezing. Staff and children should cover their mouth with their upper arm or a tissue when coughing and use a tissue when sneezing or blowing their nose. Tissues should be thrown away immediately, and then hands should be washed. Make sure tissues are available in the WIC clinics for runny noses and sneezing.
  
- ✓ **Keep your WIC clinic open if possible.** Closing a WIC clinic in the event of an outbreak is usually not recommended.
  
- ✓ **Avoid close contact.**
  
- ✓ **Clean frequently and appropriately.** In the WIC clinic, frequently clean commonly used surfaces, such as door handles, handrails, toys, etc. Commercial disinfectants or bleach solutions should be used. (Mixing ¼ cup bleach with 1 gallon of water makes bleach solution.)

**How long can viruses live outside the body on a surface like a doorknob?** Some viruses and bacteria can live 2 hours or longer on surfaces like tables, doorknobs, and desks. Frequent hand washing or using an alcohol based hand gel will help you reduce the chances of becoming ill after touching these surfaces.

**For More Information Call:  
Iowa Concern Hotline**

**Telephone Number:  
800-447-1985**

**Hours  
24 hours a day/7 days a week**

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### **Is there a vaccine for novel flu?**

Currently there is no vaccine to protect humans from novel flu.

### **Are there medicines I can take if I get sick with novel flu?**

Yes. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. They are usually used only for those at high risk of becoming seriously ill. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within 2 days of when your symptoms start).

### **Can I get some antiviral drugs to keep at home, just in case I get sick?**

No. You should not ask your healthcare provider for antiviral medication to keep at home “just in case”. If many people did this, it would mean less antivirals available for those who do get sick.

### **Can I get novel influenza from eating or preparing pork?**

No. This novel influenza virus is not spread by food. You cannot get this novel influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

### **Mailing WIC Checks**

If the local public health agency has determined that novel flu outbreak in the community is serious and/or the schools are closed for a period of time, the local WIC agency can cancel the clinic and mail checks.

If the WIC clinic staff mail checks, however, it is preferable that the agency stay open for new participants. That is a local agency decision.

Contact your state nutrition consultant if you have a novel influenza A (H1N1) outbreak in your community. If your consultant is not available, please contact Janet Peterson. Her phone number is 515-242-6388 or e-mail [jpeterso@idph.state.ia.us](mailto:jpeterso@idph.state.ia.us).

We encourage you to go to the IDPH Web site <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/> for additional information.