

# Frequently Asked Questions – influenza a (H1N1)

## **What is influenza – A (H1N1)**

Influenza – A (H1N1) (earlier known as swine flu) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. First detected in Mexico in April, 2009, it has spread to many countries in the World. Swine flu is basically a misnomer. This was originally referred to as “swine flu” because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to those found in pigs in North America. Further on, it has been found that this new virus has gene segments from the swine, avian and human flu virus genes. The scientists call this a ‘quadruple reassortant’ virus and hence this new (novel) virus is christened “influenza-A (H1N1) virus.”

## **Influenza A(H1N1) outbreak**

It is causing an epidemic among humans in Mexico and has spread to Austria, Canada, China (Hong Kong), Costa Rica, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA.

## **Is it safe to take pork items?**

Pigs have nothing to do with this disease. Pork products are absolutely safe if properly cooked. There is no need to cull pigs. Do not panic if some pigs die in the community due to natural disease.

## **Is this flu virus contagious?**

Influenza A (H1N1) virus is contagious and spreading from human to human.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of influenza-A (H1N1) in people?**

The symptoms of swine flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with influenza-A (H1N1).

## **How does influenza-A (H1N1) spread?**

Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through droplets created while coughing or sneezing by a person infected with the influenza-A (H1N1).

## **How can someone with the flu infect someone else?**

Infected person may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to seven or more days after becoming sick.

**How to keep away from getting the flu?**

First and most important: Follow simple steps as cough etiquettes (covering mouth & nose with handkerchief or tissue paper while coughing), stay at least an arm's length from persons coughing or sneezing, avoid gathering and wash your hands frequently. Try to stay in good general health. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food.

**Are there medicines to treat this flu?**

Yes. Necessary medicines in sufficient quantity are available. The Government has in the designated hospitals stored medicines if required. It is strongly advisable not to take medicines of your own, as it will lower your immunity.

**What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

- (a) Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- (b) Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- (c) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- (d) Try to avoid close contact with people having respiratory illness.
- (e) If one gets sick with influenza, one must stay at home, away from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

However, if one is having any respiratory distress, one should report to a nearby hospital.

**What steps Government of India taking to prevent outbreak of this flu in India?**

- (1) The strategy is basically to detect early cases among the passengers coming from the affected countries either by air, road or ship.
- (2) The Government has launched a massive mass media campaign to inform and educate people on dos and do nots.
- (3) Sharing information with public through media.

**APPEAL**

People who have traveled from the affected countries in these days and show symptoms of influenza A (H1N1) like fever, cough, sore throat and difficulty in breathing should immediately contact the telephone number given below or the nearby Government Hospital.

**IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS:**

Outbreak Monitoring Cell (Control Room, NICD): 011-23921401