

## H1N1 – Swine Flu

The H1N1 flu is also called the Swine Flu. Here is some important information about this flu:

- how it is spread,
- how to protect yourself and others
- what to do if you get it.



### What is H1N1?

H1N1 Flu virus is also often called swine flu. It has been reported around the world. The World Health Organization says it is a pandemic flu virus. A pandemic flu is a new flu that spreads easily between people. It also affects a wide area. A pandemic can happen in any

season. There may be two to three waves of infection after it first appears.



### **How is H1N1 spread?**

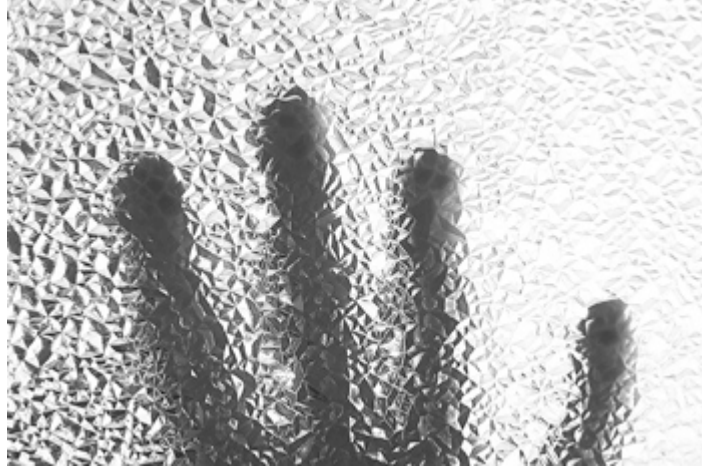
We don't really know how easy it is to spread the H1N1 virus between people. Doctors and scientists are still learning about it. They think that it is spread the same way as the regular flu. The flu is passed from person to person when germs enter the nose or throat. Coughs and sneezes release germs into the air. Then other people breathe in the germs.

Germs can also live on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs. A person touches the germs. When she touches her nose or mouth, the flu germs can infect her.



The H1N1 flu virus can live outside on hard surfaces for 24 to 48 hours. This means things made from steel or plastic. The H1N1 flu virus can live on soft surfaces for 8 to 12 hours. These are surfaces made from cloth, paper, and tissues.

But the virus can only infect a person for about 2 to 8 hours after being left on hard surfaces. It can only infect a person for a few minutes after being left on soft surfaces.



If you touch a hard surface like a doorknob that has flu germs on it, you may get the flu. You have less chance of getting the germs from touching a soft surface.

**It is important to wash your hands often.**



## **Passing on the Flu**

Doctors think that the incubation period for H1N1 is two to seven days. That means how long someone with the flu can pass it on to others. They need to find out more about how long a person can be infectious. Doctors think this period starts one day before the person feels sick. It goes on for about seven days after symptoms have started. During that whole time the flu can be spread to other people.



## **Symptoms**

Symptoms of H1N1 are like the symptoms of regular flu. People with swine flu get a fever and cough AND one or more of the following symptoms:

- sore throat
- muscle aches
- joint pain
- weakness
- stomach problems like diarrhea or vomiting

Most people get better in one or two weeks. But some people may get sicker. People with other health problems sometimes get sicker than others.

Watch for these **early warning signs**:

- trouble breathing
- pain or pressure in the chest or belly
- sudden dizziness
- confusion
- severe vomiting
- Flu improves but return with fever and worse cough

**If you have these symptoms, you need go to a doctor or the hospital.**

## **How can I help stop the spread of the flu?**

**If you are sick, stay home** from work or school. Stay away from other people if you can.

If you get sicker, call a doctor or nurse. Tell them you have a fever or cough.

**Cover your nose and mouth** with a kleenex when you sneeze. Throw it in the trash after. Cough into your sleeve if you can.



**Wash your hands often** with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze.

## **What if I've been with someone who gets the flu?**

Maybe you will be with someone who gets the H1N1 flu. Check yourself for symptoms. If you are not feeling sick, you do not need to stay home from work or school. You do not need to see a doctor or take medicine.

If you have questions, call HealthLink BC at **8-1-1** or **604-215-8110**. You can call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you have a computer, you can visit [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## **How can I protect myself and others?**

1. Wash your hands often and well with soap and warm water. Use alcohol-based hand cleaner.



2. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Immediately throw used tissues in the garbage. Wash your hands.
3. No tissue? Cough and sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve. Do not cough on your hands.
4. Keep fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth – germs are spread that way.



5. Don't share personal things like food or utensils (forks, knives, spoons, glasses, cups).

6. Avoid being close to people who have the flu.
7. Make sure you have good personal hygiene.
8. Get plenty of sleep.
9. Eat well.
10. Exercise to stay healthy.



11. Stay home if you are sick. Avoid going to stores, movies and parties. Try not to spread the flu.



## **What if there is a flu outbreak at Douglas College?**

Douglas College has a team that has prepared for the swine flu.

- Signs in the washrooms remind you the best way to wash your hands.
- There are many hand-sanitizers around the college.
- Workers are doing extra cleaning to get rid of germs.
- The college website [www.douglas.bc.ca](http://www.douglas.bc.ca) has information about H1N1.

## **Will the College have a vaccination program?**

Douglas College will offer:

- the regular flu shot
- the college will tell you about the H1N1 shot when it's ready.

If there is an outbreak at Douglas College, here are some things to do:

- Stay away from crowds. Use stairs instead of elevators.
- Avoid shaking hands, kissing or hugging people.
- Eat your lunch away from busy areas.
- Check the college website for news.
- Don't wear a mask to keep from getting the H1N1 flu. There is proof it does not help. People often use masks the wrong way. They might contaminate themselves when putting masks on and off. This can increase the risk of infection.

Please call your teacher if you stay home because you might have  
H1N1 flu.

## First Aid Phone Numbers

From a College phone:	2400 -- Both campuses
From a cell phone:	604-527-5405 -- New Westminster 604-777-6254 -- David Lam

## Questions

The following are all symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus. Some of them are more serious than others. For the less serious symptoms you should just stay home. If you have the **more serious** symptoms, you must see a doctor or go to a hospital.

Put a check mark beside the **serious** symptoms.

- Mild fever
- Confusion
- Stomach problems such as diarrhea or vomiting
- Sudden dizziness
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but return with fever and worse cough
- Sore throat
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Muscle aches
- Joint pain

- Weakness
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath

This material was written by Marilyn Smitshoek for the Douglas College I-CARE adult literacy tutoring program. You are free to use it with acknowledgement. Images from clipart.com