

ECHO Minnesota

Emergency, Community and Health Outreach



ECHO H1N1

Frequently Asked Questions (Updated May 7, 2009)

1. What is H1N1? Why does my community need to know about this now?

Suggested Answer:

- It is a new kind of influenza that people have never seen before.
- Nobody is immune to it and there is no vaccine.

2. How dangerous is it?

Suggested Answer:

- It spreads easily from person to person.
- It is widespread right now in the U.S. and worldwide – but less dangerous than once feared.

3. How do I know if I have to go to the doctor?

Suggested Answer:

- Before going in to see a doctor, call first to discuss your symptoms or concerns.
- You may not need to see a doctor.

4. What if I am undocumented? Can I still see a doctor?

Suggested Answer:

- Doctors and clinics do not usually ask about that. It is not their job.
- When you call about whether to come in, you can ask what information you will need to provide.

5. If I don't have health insurance, how can I pay for clinic services?

Suggested Answer:

- Many doctors or clinics across the state offer services based on your ability to pay.
- When you call about whether to come in, ask about how the clinic handles this.

6. Are there places where I can find these clinics?

Suggested answer:

- A partial list is available at <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfsrserver/Legacy/DHS-4741-ENG>
- You may also be able to get help from Portico Healthnet at (651) 603-5100 or <http://www.porticohealthnet.org/>

7. I'm afraid if I'm sick, I can't take time off work because I can't afford it. What should I do?

Suggested Answer:

- Unfortunately, not all employers offer paid time off when you are sick.
- Still, you should think about your fellow workers – and stay home so you will not risk making them sick.

8. What steps should my family and I be taking to protect each other and avoid spreading the flu?

Suggested Answer:

- The most important thing is to wash your hands frequently – especially before preparing or eating food, or touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve when you cough or sneeze

9. Is there anything else I should consider doing differently?

Suggested Answer:

- If possible, limit activities that involve close personal contact.
- If you or someone else is ill, staying a few feet away can help prevent the spread of the flu.

10. Is any particular group responsible – more than others – for introducing or spreading H1N1?

Suggested Answer:

- No. It would be a mistake – and inaccurate – to think of some particular group of people as having “started” the H1N1 outbreak.
- Because it is new, H1N1 is spread very easily, and can quickly become widespread.
- No particular group is more likely than any other to spread – or become infected with – this kind of flu.

11. How long is someone contagious with this kind of flu? How long do you need to stay home from work or school?

- People first become contagious about a day before symptoms appear.
- You should stay home from work or school for seven days after symptoms first appear, or until 24 hours after the symptoms go away – whichever is longer.