

Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu): Questions and Answers for Employers

Onondaga County Health Department



What is novel H1N1 (swine) flu?

- H1N1 is a novel (new) influenza A virus that is transmitted by person-to-person contact.
- H1N1 causes similar illness as seasonal flu.
- Most individuals with flu-like illness probably have H1N1, not the seasonal flu.

- Plan ahead: allow employees to work from home. This work-from-home plan should begin *before* large numbers of employees call in sick.
- Please do not require doctors' notes to excuse flu-related absences.

What can be done in both the workplace and in general to decrease the spread of influenza?

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue away, and wash your hands. Cough or sneeze into your elbow if tissue is not available.
- Continue to clean your worksite with disinfectant on a consistent basis.
- Post hand and respiratory hygiene flyers at your worksite.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

- The main symptoms are a fever over 100° F and a cough or sore throat.
- Additional symptoms may include headache, body aches, tiredness, runny or stuffy nose, diarrhea, and vomiting.
- In many cases, the symptoms are mild and last only few days.

What can be recommend to employees to help reduce their risk of getting H1N1?

- Get the H1N1 shot when it becomes available. Also, get the seasonal flu shot.
- Limit personal contact such as handshaking.
- Wash hands frequently with warm water and soap, especially after sneezing and coughing.
- Avoid close contact with anyone who is sick.

What should I do if before employees develop flu-like symptoms?

- Enforce a stay-home protocol: Advise employees to stay home from work if they have flu-like symptoms until free of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-control medicine. This will help reduce the spread of the virus to other employees.

What are health officials recommending for those who develop flu-like symptoms?

- Stay home when you have flu-like symptoms until free of fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-control medicine.
- Although most people do not need to seek treatment for the flu, if you have asthma, heart disease, diabetes, or other medical problems CALL your health care provider if you have flu-like symptoms.
- Do NOT go to an emergency room or urgent care facility with mild illness. If you have flu-like symptoms that continue or are severe, CALL your healthcare provider for guidance.

**For more information visit
www.ongov.net
or call 435-3280**