

# Things you can do: The Novel H1N1 2009 Flu Virus



Help protect you and your students

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), good health habits can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.<sup>1</sup>

## What is the novel H1N1 2009 flu virus?

The novel H1N1 virus is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. The virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. It was quickly determined that the virus spreads from person-to-person, probably in much the same way as seasonal flu. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) labeled the novel H1N1 virus as a pandemic virus.<sup>2</sup> The virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing shows that many of its genes were very similar to influenza viruses that occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs.<sup>2</sup>

## Is the novel H1N1 virus contagious?

The CDC has determined that this novel H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.<sup>2</sup>

## How does the novel H1N1 virus spread?

- Flu viruses spread mainly from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza.
- Viruses can also spread when a person touches a surface with flu viruses on it and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

## How can I protect myself and my students from the novel H1N1 virus?

- Encourage everyone to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand rubs are also effective.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Use disinfectants on frequently touched surfaces.
- If you or one of your students is sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

## What should I do if someone in my classroom has confirmed novel H1N1 virus?

- Students and staff who appear to have flu-like symptoms should be sent to a separate room until they can be sent home. The CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and that those who care for ill students and staff also wear protective gear.<sup>3</sup>
- Encourage students, faculty or staff with flu-like symptoms to stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or have signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.<sup>3</sup>
- Remember to always emphasize the importance of the basic foundations of influenza prevention: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water

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when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).<sup>3</sup>

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the classroom.<sup>3</sup> Germ “hot spots” include desks, chairs, doorknobs and computer keyboards.

The CDC also has additional guidelines in place if global and national assessments indicate conditions of increased severity. These are available at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools).

### Can household cleaning and disinfecting help prevent further transmission?

**Yes.** To help prevent transmission of germs, follow these simple steps:

- Frequently touched surfaces should be disinfected with an U.S. EPA-registered disinfectant product.
- Surfaces to disinfect include bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, toys for children, doorknobs, light switches, telephones and refrigerator handles.
- Use disinfectant wipes for frequently touched electronic items such as computer mouse and keyboards, phones and remote controls, etc.

### What disinfectants can be used?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that registered disinfectants effective against influenza A are also effective against the novel H1N1 virus on non-porous surfaces. These hard surface disinfecting products can help reduce the spread of influenza virus when used as directed:

**Clorox® Regular-Bleach\***      **Clorox® Disinfecting Wipes\***      **Clorox® Clean-Up® Cleaner with Bleach\***

Instructions for how to disinfect with EPA-registered products can be found on the product label.

- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces like surfaces in the bathroom, toys for children, door knobs, light switches, telephones and refrigerator handles.
- Use disinfectant wipes for frequently touched electronic items like a computer mouse and keyboard, phones and remote controls, etc.

**For more information about the novel H1N1 virus and what you can do to help protect you and your students, visit:**

[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) or [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov)