



H1N1 “SWINE FLU” AND HIV: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

How is H1N1 spread?

- Infected people can spread the virus when they cough or sneeze into the air. People can get infected by breathing in droplets released when the infected person coughs or sneezes, or by touching something with flu viruses on it, then touching their mouth or nose.

If I have HIV/AIDS, should I get the H1N1 vaccination?

- CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. These target groups include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of a chronic health disorder or compromised immune systems. This would include people living with HIV.

Is my chance of contracting H1N1 greater because I have HIV/AIDS?

- At the present time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have no information about the risk of the novel H1N1 flu in people with HIV/AIDS. In the past, people with HIV/AIDS have not appeared to be at any greater risk than the general population for infection with routine seasonal influenza. However, HIV-infected adults and adolescents, and especially persons with low CD4 cell counts or AIDS, can experience more severe complications of seasonal influenza. It is therefore possible that HIV-infected adults and adolescents are also at higher risk for complications from infection with the H1N1 flu virus.

How can I protect myself and others from H1N1?

- Although there is no vaccine available yet to prevent novel influenza A (H1N1) virus infection, taking the following steps will help reduce your risk for contracting H1N1 virus:
 - Wash your hands frequently
 - Cover your mouth when coughing
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands – germs spread this way
 - Stay home if ill unless you are seeking medical care or other necessities
 - Reduce your amount of unnecessary social contacts
 - Avoid crowded settings in communities where H1N1 is circulation whenever possible
 - HIV-infected persons should maintain a healthy lifestyle; eat right, get enough sleep, and reduce stress as much as possible. Staying healthy reduces your risk of getting infected by influenza and other infections. Staying health also helps your immune system fight off a flu infection should it occur.
 - Adhere to your medications! In particular, people who are currently taking antiretrovirals or antimicrobial prophylaxis against opportunistic infections should be reminded of the importance of adhering to their prescribed treatment.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

- Signs and symptoms of infection with the novel H1N1 influenza are generally the same as for seasonal influenza: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, body aches (muscle aches or joint pain), chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with novel H1N1 flu.



What should I do if I think I have H1N1?

- HIV-infected people should do the same things as they would do for routine seasonal flu – contact your health care provider and follow his or her instructions. He or she will determine if laboratory testing or treatment is needed. If you are sick, stay home and keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick. *If you have novel H1N1 flu, you should stay at 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.) If you need to go to a doctor's office, to an emergency room, or to any other healthcare facility to be evaluated, cover your mouth and nose with a facemask if a facemask is available and tolerable, or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Let the office staff know you are there because you think you might have novel H1N1 flu.

Is there treatment against novel H1N1 flu for people with HIV/AIDS?

- Yes. The novel H1N1 flu virus is sensitive to two antiviral drugs: zanamivir and oseltamivir. HIV-infected adults and adolescents who meet current case-definitions for confirmed, probable or suspected infection with novel H1N1 flu should receive antiviral treatment. Treatment is most effective if started within 48 hours of symptom onset. Please check the CDC website frequently for updates in recommendations for antiviral treatment.

Are the medicines used to treat and prevent infection with the novel H1N1 flu virus safe for people with HIV/AIDS?

- There is not a lot of information on the interaction between anti-flu medications and HIV antiretrovirals. No adverse effects have been reported among HIV-infected adults and adolescents who received oseltamivir or zanamivir. There are no known major drug interactions between oseltamivir or zanamivir with currently available antiretroviral medications used to treat HIV infection. If you are prescribed oseltamivir or zanamivir and think you might be having a reaction to the drug, contact your health care provider. Healthcare providers should observe patients for possible adverse drug reactions to anti-influenza agents, especially patients with neurologic problems or decreased kidney function.

What other information should I know about H1N1 and HIV?

- Adults and adolescents with HIV/AIDS who come into close contact with a person who has H1N1 flu should receive antiviral chemoprophylaxis.
- CDC, in coordination with state and local health departments and with WHO is working aggressively to understand the epidemiology of this novel H1N1 flu and determine if it affects HIV-infected people and people with other immunocompromising conditions differently. As additional information about the situation become available, the CDC's recommendations may change. Please check the CDC [H1N1 Flu website](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/) frequently.

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Information taken from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/hiv_flu.htm as of October 21, 2009. GMHC will update this document periodically.