

H1N1 (Swine) Flu Facts for Parents and Students

- 2009 H1N1 (Swine) flu is caused by a new flu virus. It causes symptoms and disease severity similar to seasonal flu. One of the differences is the H1N1 virus impacts younger people more than the elderly. H1N1 disease is most common in people age 24 and younger.
- By far, most people with H1N1 (Swine) flu have illness like any other flu and recover well in a few days. Although very rare, a few people develop serious complications and have to be hospitalized or even die from H1N1 flu. That's why flu and its prevention is taken so seriously. Although anyone can have complications, people at increased risk include children less than 5 years old (especially those less than 2), pregnant women, and people with underlying health problems like heart or lung disease (including asthma), diabetes, neurologic disease, or a weakened immune system.
- Hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and discarding used tissues are simple ways to prevent spread of H1N1. Staying home from work or school when sick is very important.
- There is now a new tool to prevent H1N1 (Swine) Flu. The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is made just the same way that seasonal flu vaccine is made. Like manufacturers do every year with seasonal flu vaccine, they simply made the vaccine to the new flu virus (H1N1). The manufacturers, processes, equipment, and formulations are all the same. Given this, CDC and other vaccine experts expect the H1N1 vaccine to be as safe as seasonal flu vaccine. All H1N1 vaccine studies to date show the same safety level, too.
- There are two types of vaccine: the flu shot and the nasal spray. This is the same as with seasonal flu vaccine. Neither vaccine can give you or anyone else the flu, even the "live" virus nasal spray; for the vaccine virus is too weak to cause disease.
- Anyone over 6 months of age can be vaccinated with the flu shot. The most common side effect from the shot is a sore, tender, or red area at the injection site. The nasal spray H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine is used in healthy people age 2 to 49 years old who are not pregnant. The most common side effect with the nasal spray vaccine is a few days of nasal congestion. Sometimes, either vaccine can cause a mild fever or achiness for a few days. This is not the flu. As with any vaccine or medication, an allergic reaction to a vaccine is possible, but very rare.
- Quality and safety is most important and vaccine production takes time. Vaccine supply will continue to increase across West Virginia in the weeks and months to come. By January, we expect anyone who wants to be vaccinated to have the opportunity to do so.
- As vaccine is made, local health departments are receiving shipments weekly. Each health department works with local partners including some healthcare providers and your school system to make vaccine available to children and others at greatest risk of disease or its complications. Over time, vaccine will be available in a wider variety of locations.
- Learn more about H1N1 Flu and H1N1 Flu Vaccine by going to the West Virginia H1N1 Flu website at www.wvflu.org or to www.cdc.gov/h1n1. These websites have the latest facts and information as well as information on where to learn more about vaccine availability in your community.