

Protect yourself. Protect others.

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)

Information for the general public

23 June 2009

We all have a role to play.

Protect yourself. Protect others.

We expect this will be a significant flu season, with a new strain of flu in the community, as well as other seasonal flu strains.

Help protect yourself and others from flu by taking these steps if you feel unwell:

- People with mild flu-like illness should stay home.
- People who are moderately unwell with flu-like symptoms should call ahead then visit their doctor.
- Only people who are seriously unwell should visit a hospital emergency department.

Close contacts and people living in the same house as someone with flu-like symptoms, will not be placed into quarantine.

Only people who are at higher risk of complications from flu will be given antiviral medication.

Be immunised

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to provide protection against Human Swine Flu — however it is still recommended as protection against seasonal flu for people aged over 65 and for those with chronic medical conditions.

Good hygiene remains vital

Good health hygiene can reduce the chance you will get the flu or pass it on to others.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw the tissue in a plastic-lined rubbish bin after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

What the 'Protect' phase means

Victoria and the majority of Australia are now in the 'Protect' phase of managing the impact of Human Swine Flu in our community. This means Victoria is focusing efforts on:

- Treating people from high-risk groups, such as pregnant women, the morbidly obese and people who suffer from chronic illness and respiratory illness.
- Controlling outbreaks of flu in high-risk settings, such as in aged care facilities.

Schools will not be routinely closed because of flu. Children who experience the rapid onset of flu-like illness should be excluded from school until they are well.

Some people are more at risk

You are considered to be at higher risk of complications from flu if:

- You are pregnant
- You are morbidly obese (overweight)
- You suffer from a chronic illness such as diabetes
- You suffer from any respiratory illness such as asthma

If you are concerned you should speak to your doctor.

The illness

What is Human Swine Flu?

Human Swine Flu (H1N1 Influenza 09) is caused by a new influenza virus.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The symptoms of Human Swine Flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

Some people have diarrhoea and vomiting associated with Human Swine Flu.

How serious is the H1N1 strain of flu?

This illness is classified as 'moderate'. This means the majority (95%) of cases are mild. However 5% of cases are severe, which means that those effected may require hospitalisation and intensive care.

This is a new flu strain and as with any new strain of flu there is a possibility of someone dying. This is more likely to occur in high-risk groups, but is also possible in the general population, including young adults and adolescents.

Normal seasonal flu – the facts:

- Up to one million Australians contract seasonal flu every year.
- On average 2,500 people die from seasonal flu each year.

Currently, the vast majority of people experiencing mild flu-like symptoms are making a full recovery, without receiving any medical treatment.

How does Human Swine Flu spread?

Human Swine Flu is contagious and is spreading the same way seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing.

Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How long can an infected person spread Human Swine Flu to others?

People with the Human Swine Flu virus may be contagious for up to seven days following the start of the illness.

The virus may remain on hands for five minutes. Washing your hands frequently will reduce the chance of contamination from common surfaces.

Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

What is the Government doing?

We have the best health experts working on this.

Victoria continues to closely monitor this new flu strain by:

- Investigating severe cases of flu, to help us understand more about the virus and who may be most at risk.
- Following our pandemic plan. This includes:
 - focusing treatment on the most vulnerable, high risk groups
 - working with GPs, pharmacies and hospitals
 - concentrating our efforts and resources where there is most need and the most flu cases.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Visit www.health.vic.gov.au

Call the Swine Influenza Hotline Tel 180 2007

Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice
(24 hours, 7 days)