

Flu-Like Illness

Frequently Asked Questions

What is seasonal flu?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs that is caused by influenza virus. The flu can spread from person to person. Most people with flu are sick for about a week, but then feel better. However, some people (especially young children, pregnant women, older people, and people with chronic health problems) can get very sick and some can die.

What is H1N1?

Novel H1N1 flu is a new and very different influenza virus that is spreading worldwide among people. This new virus was called "swine flu" at first because it has pieces of flu viruses found in pigs in the past. However, novel H1N1 virus has not been detected in U.S. pigs.

What are the symptoms of seasonal flu and H1N1?

Symptoms of seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu include sudden onset of: fever (greater than 100°F / 38°C) cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, **seek emergency medical care immediately**:

Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath	Not waking up or lethargy
Fever and shaking chills	Pain or pressure in chest or abdomen
Bluish or gray skin color	Sudden dizziness
Not drinking enough fluids (dehydrated)	Confusion
Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough	Severe or persistent vomiting

How does the flu spread?

People who have the flu usually cough, sneeze and have a runny nose. This makes droplets with virus in them. Other people can get the flu by breathing in these droplets, getting them in their nose or mouth, or touching contaminated surfaces.

Healthy adults may be able to spread the flu from 1 day before getting sick to up to 5 days after getting sick. This can be longer in children and in people who don't fight disease as well (people with weakened immune systems).

Should I get vaccinated?

CDC recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal flu. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three seasonal viruses that research suggests will be most common. **A seasonal vaccine will not protect you against H1N1.** A vaccine against H1N1 flu is being produced and will be available in the coming months as an option for the prevention of the new H1N1 flu.

Should I go to school or work if my roommate or family members are sick?

If I have flu-like symptoms, should I go see a doctor?
Depends...

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

I think I had the flu and feel better now. Can I go back to work and school?

Students or employees who are well but who have an ill person at home with flu-like symptoms can go to school and work as usual. These people should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. If they become ill, they should notify their professors and/or supervisors and stay home. Those who have an underlying medical condition (see below) or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs.

NO - Most cases of flu-like illness have been mild. **Generally, healthy students with flu-like illness do not need to be seen by a medical provider.** You can call 4243 and talk with the Health Center nurse. The nurse can assist you with home care instructions, isolation and answer your questions.

YES - **People with chronic medical problems experiencing flu-like illness need to be seen by a medical provider.** If you have any of the following medical problems, seek medical care:

- Immunosuppression due to HIV/Aids, chemotherapy, cancer, etc.
- Pregnant women
- Asthma or chronic pulmonary disease (e.g. cystic fibrosis)
- Cardiovascular disease
- Chronic kidney or liver disease
- Diabetes, adrenal insufficiency
- Blood disorders (platelet & clotting disorders)
- Chronic rheumatological disorders (lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, etc.)
- Gastrointestinal disease (Crohn's, ulcerative colitis, etc.)

If your flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough, call Student Health Services or your medical provider immediately.

For most healthy adults, medication is not generally prescribed, but antiviral drugs are available that can treat both seasonal flu and H1N1. These drugs can make people feel better and get better sooner. But they need to be prescribed by a doctor and they work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. The priority use for these drugs is to treat people who require hospitalization or have a medical condition that puts them at high risk of serious flu complications.

Persons should stay at home and avoid contact with others for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone (without using any fever reducing medication). Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

This is an extremely important public health measure that will help limit the spread of the flu virus.

If you have a suspected or confirmed case of H1N1, please report it to the Office of Environmental Health & Safety, 4463.



Responding to Flu-Like Symptoms

Tips for avoiding illness:

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when soap and water aren't available.
- Use antibacterial/alcohol wipes to frequently clean room surfaces.
- If using community bathrooms, wash your hands well after using the toilet or touching surfaces
- Don't share personal items.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or tissue, NOT your hands!
- Get a seasonal flu shot when they are available. (will be available to students in the Student Health Center)
- Get the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available to the general public.

Symptoms of flu:

Sudden onset of:

- Fever (>100°F)
- Cough, sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches, headache
- Chills and fatigue

If you experience these symptoms:

- If you live in the dorms, tell your RA.
- Return to your family home for isolation if possible.
- Tell your roommate if you have one.
- If isolating in your on-campus residence, **wear a mask in shared spaces** such as bathrooms, or when interacting with others. Masks are available in the Student Health Center.
- Talk to your RA if you will need meals in your dorm room.
- Tie up your trash before taking it to the dumpster
- Keep hydrated.
- Contact your professors if you will miss class.

If your roommate is sick:

- Talk to the Res Life Director to see about a short-term relocation
- If that is not possible, maintain at least 6 feet between you and the ill person.
- Clean your space, including door knobs, faucets, appliances, etc.

If you suspect or have confirmed that you have the H1N1 virus, report it to:

- Office of Environmental Health & Safety, 4463.

If you have questions or need advice, contact Joan Roche, Student Health Nurse at 4243. She is in the office from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm Monday through Friday. A doctor is in the Center from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm M-F.

