Pandemic H1N1 flu

Introduction

- Pandemic H1N1 (originally referred to as “swine” flu) is a respiratory disease caused by type A H1N1 influenza virus.
- Human cases of pandemic H1N1 influenza started showing up in the U.S. in late March 2009, and quickly spread throughout the country and the world. In June 2009, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic of the new virus.

Risks

- Infections with pandemic H1N1 flu can be mild to severe. Most cases in the U.S. have been similar to seasonal flu.
- Certain groups are at increased risk of complications from pandemic H1N1. These include pregnant women, infants, children and young adults up to 24 years of age; and those with chronic health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, or compromised immunity.
- People in these groups who develop a high fever with cough, sore throat, or muscle aches—or parents of young children with these symptoms, should call their health care provider.
- Like other influenza illness, pandemic H1N1 flu spreads from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people who are sick.
- You cannot get pandemic H1N1 flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

Symptoms

- The symptoms of pandemic H1N1 are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also experienced diarrhea and vomiting.
- Like seasonal flu, pandemic H1N1 may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. Most deaths have been in people with underlying medical conditions.
- Seek emergency medical care if you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs:
  - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
  - Sudden dizziness
  - Confusion
  - Severe or persistent vomiting.
- In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:
  - Fast breathing or trouble breathing
  - Bluish skin color
  - Not drinking enough fluids
  - Not waking up or not interacting
  - Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
  - Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough
  - Fever with a rash.

Flu facts


www.flu.oregon.gov
Treatment

• Most people with pandemic H1N1 get better with bed rest, good nutrition, and use of over-the-counter medications to relieve symptoms.

• In specific circumstances, antiviral medications may be helpful in reducing symptoms or preventing the spread of disease. Currently, this would only be for hospitalized patients, individuals with chronic health conditions who are at high risk of complications, or close contacts of those at high risk.

• Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in the body.

• If treatment is started within two days of the onset of symptoms, antiviral drugs can help prevent serious flu complications, may make illness milder and help patients feel better faster.

Prevention

• Vaccine to protect against pandemic H1N1 is expected to be ready soon.

• Regular flu vaccines do not generally protect against pandemic H1N1 flu. However, seasonal influenza is a serious illness that kills approximately 36,000 people in the U.S. each year. It is important to get vaccinated against the flu every year.

• There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza. Take these everyday steps to protect your health:
  - Cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
  - Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
  - Always stay home from work or school when you're sick, and limit contact with others to keep them from getting sick.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Smoking and the flu

• People who smoke get the flu more easily and get sicker. People who breathe secondhand smoke, especially children and older people, get the flu more easily and get sicker.

• Quit smoking now. Call the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free coaching and advice on quitting. The call is free and confidential. Patches or medicines to help you quit may be available. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW today or go to www.quitnow.net/oregon.

For more information

Oregon Public Health Division
www.flu.oregon.gov

Oregon Public Health Hotline
1-800-978-3040

Oregon county health departments
www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/lhd/lhd.shtml

Federal pandemic H1N1 flu information
www.flu.gov

World Health Organization:
www.who.int

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DHS 9745 (Rev. 09/22/09)
Prepare for two flus this season
Each year brings a seasonal flu virus. This year, Oregon is also planning for cases of the H1N1 flu (once known as “swine flu”).

The H1N1 flu and the seasonal flu share many symptoms, such as fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, aches, chills and fatigue. With H1N1, some people may also experience diarrhea or vomiting.

Two flus mean two vaccines
The H1N1 and seasonal flus are different viruses and require different vaccines.

- To fully protect yourself, you will need two vaccines: One for seasonal flu, and one for the H1N1 flu.
- Some children will need two doses of each vaccine.

Both vaccines are available as a shot or a nasal spray. Certain groups should not use vaccine nasal spray (see box).

Ask your doctor about what is best for you, and whether you can get the flu vaccines at your doctor’s office.

Who can use vaccine nasal spray:
People who are generally healthy, not pregnant and between the ages of two and 49.

Who cannot use vaccine nasal spray:
Children under age two; adults aged 50 or older; pregnant women; people with chronic medical conditions; children receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

OHP coverage of flu vaccines
The Oregon Health Plan (OHP) will pay for both vaccines for all OHP clients, except for Citizen-Alien Waived Emergency Medical (CAWEM) clients and OHP clients with Medicare coverage.

How to get the vaccine
If your doctor is not providing the seasonal or H1N1 flu vaccines:
- Call 1-800-SAFENET or visit www.flucliniclocator.org to find a seasonal flu clinic near you.
- H1N1 vaccines should be available later this month. Find out where to get it by calling the Public Health Division’s Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040.

Certain groups should get H1N1 vaccine as soon as possible
Get H1N1 vaccine as soon as possible for:
- Anyone six months to 24 years old;
- Pregnant women;
- People caring for or living with infants under six months of age;
- People aged 25 to 64 with medical conditions such as asthma or immune deficiencies;
- Health care workers; and
- Front-line law enforcement officers.

For more information about what you can do to stay healthy and help stop the flu from spreading, go to http://flu.oregon.gov.

Questions?
REG Fee-for-service (“open card”) clients — Contact OHP Client Services at 1-800-273-0557.
REG DMAP Medical Plan clients — Contact your medical plan.
REG Medicare clients — Contact your Medicare health plan or 1-800-MEDICARE.
REG If you need this letter in another format, such as (but not limited to) large print, Braille, audio recordings, Web-based communications and other electronic formats — Contact your OHP worker.