

Information sheet

City of Hamilton
Public Health Services

(Current as of May 6, 2009)



Hamilton

H1N1 Swine Influenza

Q & A for families with school-aged children

What is H1N1 Swine Influenza?

H1N1 Swine Influenza (also called Swine flu) is a strain of the influenza virus that is new in humans. The virus is related to pig influenza virus, but has adapted to infect humans. People with swine flu experience many of the same symptoms as with regular seasonal flu such as:

- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- headache
- lack of appetite
- fatigue

Some people with human Swine Influenza have also reported vomiting and diarrhea.

How can I avoid getting the Swine Influenza?

As with any other infection, the best way to reduce the spread of this illness is by frequently washing your hands with soap and water, coughing and sneezing into your sleeve instead of your hands, and staying home when you feel ill. Take care of yourself by eating well and getting enough sleep and exercise. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol) if water and soap are not available.

Should I purchase masks to use to avoid getting the Swine Influenza?

At this time, there is no need for members of the general public to purchase or stockpile masks. We are asking everyone to wash their hands with soap and water frequently, cough and sneeze into their sleeve, and stay home if they are not well.

How is the H1N1 Swine Influenza spread?

Swine flu is transmitted from person to person via the respiratory route, the same way as seasonal influenza. Coughs and sneezes release the germs into the air where they can be breathed in by others. Germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can be picked up on hands and transmitted to the respiratory system when someone touches their mouth and/or nose.

Influenza can be passed to others up to 24 hours before illness starts. It appears that swine flu can be spread for up to 7 days after illness starts. Children may spread the virus for longer periods. Initial investigation shows that the incubation period of the human swine influenza (the period between exposure to a sick person and the development of symptoms) is usually four to five days.

Is there a treatment for H1N1 Swine Influenza?

It appears that Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamavir) each work to combat swine flu, so these drugs can be used to treat severe swine influenza cases if treatment is started within two days of symptom onset. Mild illness in a healthy person is very likely to go away on its own and does not require treatment.

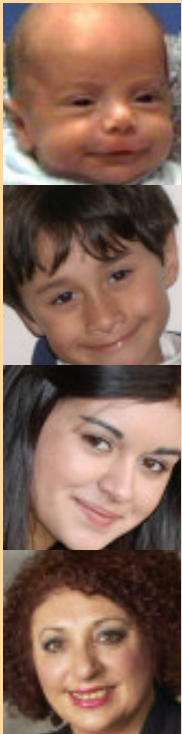


Hamilton-Wentworth
Catholic Schools

For further information, please contact:

Public Health Services at **905-546-2424, Ext. 7970**

or email H1N1flu@hamilton.ca, or visit www.hamilton.ca.



Is there a vaccine for the H1N1 Swine Influenza?

There is currently no vaccine available for swine flu. Canada has a contract with a vaccine manufacturer for vaccine production in the event of a pandemic. Once the pandemic strain has been confirmed, it may take up to six months for an effective vaccine to be developed and tested. The contract covers the production of enough pandemic vaccine for all Canadians.

Can I get swine flu from eating pork?

No. Proper cooking of pork destroys any viruses.

What should I do if I've been to Mexico and I have symptoms of a respiratory illness?

If you have recently travelled to Mexico and are feeling ill enough that you need to seek medical attention, call your health care provider to discuss your symptoms and travel history. If symptoms require you to go to a hospital or urgent care clinic, tell the hospital or clinic immediately that you have travelled to Mexico in the last 7 days. If you are not feeling very sick, use your judgment; you may not need to see a doctor. If you are not sick, you do not need to seek medical care, even if you have been to Mexico.

Should I travel to Mexico or one of the other affected areas?

The Federal government through Public Health Agency of Canada and Foreign Affairs is responsible for issuing travel advice to Canadians. Travel advisories can be found at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/pub-eng.php> and http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp.

What should I do if someone I know is coming to Canada from Mexico?

There are no restrictions for individuals travelling from Mexico. If someone coming from Mexico becomes ill in Canada with signs and symptoms of Swine Influenza and needs medical attention, be sure to call ahead to discuss their symptoms and travel history. If symptoms require them to go to a hospital or urgent care clinic, tell the hospital or clinic immediately that the person has come from Mexico in the last 7 days.

Where can I get more information?

- City of Hamilton residents with questions concerning H1N1 Swine Influenza can contact Public Health Services by phoning (905) 546-2424 ext 7970 Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am to 4pm, or by emailing H1N1flu@hamilton.ca.
- For updated information about H1N1 flu virus, you may visit the alert on the City of Hamilton website www.hamilton.ca.
- For information on pandemics and preparing for a pandemic, go to: www.hamilton.ca/pandemic
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care www.health.moh.gov.on.ca
Information Line 1-800-476-9708
- Public Health Agency of Canada www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
PHAC's toll-free information number: 1-800-454-8302
- World Health Organization www.who.int



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