

May 1, 2009 (p.m.)

H1N1 Flu Virus (Human Swine Flu)

Toronto Public Health is working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Public Health Agency of Canada to monitor for H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu), and to implement actions to reduce its transmission.

If you have been to Mexico and are experiencing flu-like symptoms:

Stay home. Distance yourself from others around you. If you are sick enough to require medical attention, call your doctor. Tell them that you are sick and have travelled to Mexico in the last 7 days. Most cases of human swine flu in Canada and the U.S. have been mild, and people recover fully at home without the need for medical care.

If you have been to Mexico and are well:

Continue with your normal daily routines - there is no need to stay home. Watch for symptoms of flu. Please do not seek medical attention if you are feeling well.

If you have general questions about swine flu, call [TeleHealth Ontario](tel:1-866-797-0000) at 1-866-797-0000.

If you are a healthcare provider and have questions about patient care and swine flu, call 1-866-212-2272 or go to <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/ihn.html>.

If you are looking for travel advice, go to <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tmp-pmv/pub-eng.php>.

What is H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu)?

H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) is a variant of normal seasonal influenza that contains bits of viruses from birds, pigs and humans. People with H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) experience many of the same symptoms as with regular seasonal flu:

Headache	Weakness/fatigue
Cough	Nausea
Muscle aches	Vomiting
Sore throat	Diarrhea
Fever	Chills

How is H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) spread?

We are still investigating how H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) is transmitted but it is likely spread from person to person via the respiratory route, the same 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 H1N1 flu virus (human 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 is between two and seven days.

How can I avoid getting H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu)?

You can decrease your risk of getting H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu), and any other type of influenza, by following these basic precautions:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly or use an alcohol-hand sanitizer
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm, not in your hands
- Stay home if you are ill

Is wearing a mask recommended for the general population?

No. In keeping with the current directives from provincial and federal health authorities, Toronto Public Health is not recommending the use of face masks for the general population.

How severe is the H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu)?

The majority of cases of H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) reported in Canada and the United States have been mild. Some of the cases reported in Mexico have been more severe, involving primarily healthy young people who rapidly progressed from mild illness to severe respiratory distress. Some illnesses have resulted in death. The Public Health Agency of Canada has been working with the WHO, Mexican and American health officials to determine why cases in Mexico appear to be more severe.

Is there a treatment for H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu)?

It appears that Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamavir) work to combat H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu), so these drugs can be used to treat severe H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) cases if treatment is started within two days of symptom onset. Mild illness that appears to be going away on its own does not require treatment. H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) is resistant to amantadine.

Is there a vaccine for H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu)?

There is currently no vaccine available for H1N1 flu virus (human 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 H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) from eating pork?

No. Cooking destroys the virus.

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>.

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 mild symptoms of H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu), they should stay home. If symptoms requires medical attention, be sure to call ahead to discuss the symptoms and travel history.

Where can I get more information?

- Toronto Public Health is providing ongoing updates at www.toronto.ca/health.
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care <http://www.health.gov.on.ca>
- Public Health Agency of Canada <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>
PHAC's toll-free information number: 1-800-454-8302

- World Health Organization <http://www.who.int>