

H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

Signs, prevention, and treatment

What is H1N1 (swine flu)?

H1N1 (referred to as "swine flu" early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person to person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

How does H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus?

Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. There have also been a significant number of infected people who have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

As a Blue Shield member, am I covered for a vaccination?

Blue Shield of California will cover the administrative costs of the H1N1 virus (swine flu) vaccine for all members of fully insured plans, regardless of which plan they have. Blue Shield will waive prior authorizations, copays, and deductibles for office

visits when members go to an in-network provider to get H1N1 vaccinations. We will also provide prescription drug coverage for Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) – the two anti-viral drugs used to treat flu symptoms.

Who should receive the H1N1 vaccine?

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the H1N1 vaccine. These individuals include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

Tips to avoid catching the flu

Everyday precautions to stay healthy:

- Cover your nose and mouth with 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 hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Try to avoid close contact with individuals who are sick.

Blue Shield of California continues to monitor the H1N1 influenza outbreak closely. The facts of the outbreak and the flu virus are rapidly changing, so please refer to the CDC Web site or call 800-CDC-INFO [(800) 232-4636] or e-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov for emerging details.

For your reference, we have included some additional resources:

CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

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

California Department of Health:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

PandemicFlu.gov: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/>

Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu