

On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that a global pandemic of H1N1 (swine flu) was in progress by raising the worldwide pandemic alert level to phase six, signaling the need for response and mitigation efforts. This was a reflection of the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. At the time, more than 70 countries had reported cases of H1N1.

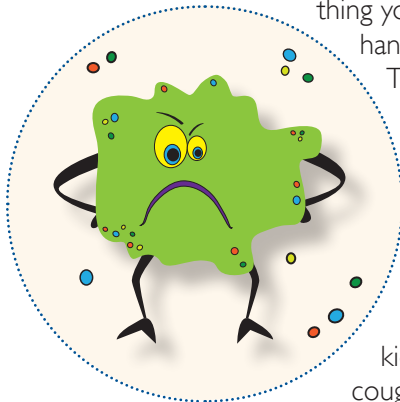
THE U.S. CONTINUES TO REPORT THE LARGEST NUMBER OF H1N1 CASES; HOWEVER, MOST PEOPLE WHO CONTRACTED THE VIRUS RECOVERED WITHOUT REQUIRING MEDICAL TREATMENT.

Since June, the virus has continued to spread, with the number of countries reporting cases of H1N1 almost doubling. The U.S. continues to report the largest number of H1N1 cases; however, most people who contracted the virus recovered without requiring medical treatment.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts that there will be more cases of H1N1 into the fall and winter. According to the CDC, "The novel H1N1 virus, in conjunction with regular seasonal influenza viruses, poses the potential to cause significant illness with associated hospitalizations and deaths during the U.S. influenza season."

FIVE THINGS PARENTS CAN DO

- 1. Make sure your kids do the basics.** Remind them often to get plenty of rest, keep their hands to themselves, not share food or eating utensils, and sneeze or cough into a tissue. Tell them to throw the tissue in the trash after they use it, and to wash their hands afterward. The most important thing you can do is to teach your kids to wash their hands regularly with warm water for 15–20 seconds. They also can use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Teach them to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.



- 2. Teach kids that five feet is the magic number.** Philip Tierno, director of Clinical Microbiology and Diagnostic Immunology at Tisch Hospital, advises parents to teach their kids to keep their distance from anyone who is coughing, sneezing, or appears to be sick. "That's a

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

If your child becomes sick and experiences any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- 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

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO IS TO TEACH YOUR KIDS TO WASH THEIR HANDS REGULARLY WITH WARM WATER FOR 15–20 SECONDS.

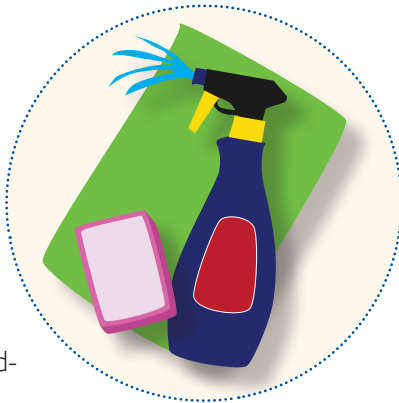
In adults, emergency warning symptoms that need immediate medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

continued

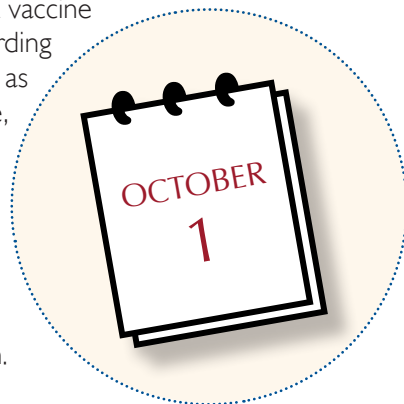
good safeguard until you can get out of there," Tierno says. The CDC recommends as much as six feet of distance. Although H1N1 is also known as swine flu, it cannot be transmitted by eating pork or spending time on a farm. It is also not transmitted through pool water. The main way H1N1 is transmitted is through person-to-person contact—not by eating pork, visiting a farm, or by swimming in a pool.

- 3. Disinfect surfaces.** If washing hands regularly is the best way to prevent flu, the second best way is to clean the surfaces your family touches the most. This includes door knobs, the handle of the refrigerator, handrails, and kitchen and bathroom counters.



DISINFECT SURFACES. IF WASHING HANDS REGULARLY IS THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT FLU, THE SECOND BEST WAY IS TO CLEAN THE SURFACES YOUR FAMILY TOUCHES THE MOST.

- 4. Consider the H1N1 vaccine.** A vaccine for H1N1 is in the works. According to the CDC, it may be available as early as October. To be effective, though, kids need two doses, spaced several weeks apart, so they will not be fully protected until late winter. Because the vaccines are being rushed to market, there will also not be that much time for testing them.



ALTHOUGH H1N1 IS ALSO KNOWN AS SWINE FLU, IT CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED BY EATING PORK OR SPENDING TIME ON A FARM. IT IS ALSO NOT TRANSMITTED THROUGH POOL WATER. THE MAIN WAY H1N1 IS TRANSMITTED IS THROUGH PERSON-TO-PERSON CONTACT.

Discuss with your partner how you feel about the H1N1 vaccine, so you're prepared to act upon its release.

- 5. Practice some degree of social distancing.** If your child has a play date, check with the parents to make sure that no one in the home is sick. Also, keep your child away from family members or friends with cold symptoms.

Source: CDC.gov

The information provided in this article does not constitute the rendering of medical, health, legal or other professional advice or services. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with questions you may have regarding medical conditions.