

SELF-CARE OF SUSPECTED CASES OF H1N1

The flu, (influenza) is an airborne virus and it is spread from one person to another by droplets from coughing or sneezing. There are many types of flu, but the one currently receiving attention is the H1N1 virus or Swine Flu. The flu is caused by a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics. Symptoms of the flu are felt throughout the body, but the virus lives and multiplies primarily in the lungs. The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and can include fever (greater than 100°F), sore throat, cough, runny or stuffy nose, chills, fatigue, headache, body aches. A significant number of people who have been infected with the H1N1 virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. If you have the flu, it is important that you care for yourself and limit your exposure to others.

At this point in time it appears that the illness caused by H1N1 is relatively mild and of short duration (3-5 days) in the majority of those infected. For most of these people, who are not seriously ill or at high risk for complications, antiviral medication is usually not recommended because the benefits may be modest.

Call your health care provider, if you have severe illness (noted below) or you are at high risk for flu complications. People at higher risk of serious complications include people age 65 years and older, children younger than 5 years old, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), and people who are immunosuppressed. For UNH students, contact UNH Health Services at (603) 862-2856 during open hours or call (603) 862-1530 after hours.

Here are suggestions to help you to feel better:

- Rest – If you feel well enough to be up and about, OK – but take it easy!
- Increase your intake of clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks) to keep from getting dehydrated. Your body needs extra fluids when you have a fever.
- Gargle with 1 tsp salt in 8 oz warm water.
- Increase humidity (use a vaporizer/humidifier), if you have a sore throat.
- Consider taking acetaminophen (Tylenol), or ibuprofen (Advil). These analgesics will help to lower a fever and reduce headaches and body aches. Children and adolescents should avoid aspirin when they have the flu because it can cause Reye's syndrome, a rare but serious illness.
- Consider taking an expectorant, (Robitussin) if you have a cough. This will help liquefy the secretions and help your body cough up phlegm. You can also use cough drops or throat lozenges for symptom relief.
- Eat nutritious food.
- Manage your stress.

If symptoms worsen, please call (603) 862-2856 when Health Services is open or call (603) 862-1530 when Health Services is closed (after-hours).

A person may be able to infect others for 1 day before getting sick to 10 days after onset of the illness. Adults are generally infectious for 5-7 days.

Here are suggestions to help decrease the chance of infecting others:

- Keep away from others as much as possible. Do not go to classes, work or participate in social activities.

- Please remain in your place of residence (home, residence hall, apartment, etc.) for 24 hours after your fever (without the use of fever-reducing medications) is gone. (Your fever should be gone.)
- If you must leave your residence (to go to the bathroom or outside), wear a facemask, if available and tolerated, to reduce the risk of spreading the virus when you cough, sneeze, talk or breathe. If a mask is unavailable, use a tissue and dispose of the tissue properly.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow/sleeve. Do not use your hands. If you need to use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose, dispose of the tissue properly after use.
- You and everyone who lives with you should wash their hands frequently since you can pick up germs/viruses through shaking hands, sharing drinking glasses or utensils, touching a doorknob or phone, etc. with soap and water. Wash your hands for 20 seconds (Sing the “Happy Birthday Song” twice.) Use paper towels to dry your hands or a cloth towel that will only be used by you. When soap and water are unavailable and hands are not visibly dirty, use alcohol-based (at least 60 percent alcohol) hand gel.
- If possible, wear a facemask when you are within 6 feet of others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth since germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek medical care immediately.

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