



# Pandemic H1N1 (Swine) Influenza 2009 Update

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

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## *Current Situation*

Pandemic H1N1/swine flu continues to circulate in Monterey County and worldwide.

Currently, H1N1/swine flu is a lot like seasonal flu. Most people who become ill will experience only a mild illness and most get better on their own without medicine.

As with the seasonal flu, some people are more vulnerable to serious illness if they come down with the flu. Those at high risk of becoming seriously ill include children under 2, adults over 65, pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes or asthma.

## *What about masks?*

Information on the effectiveness of facemasks and respirators for decreasing the risk of influenza infection in community settings is extremely limited. Consequently, it is difficult to assess their potential effectiveness in decreasing the risk of H1N1/swine flu virus transmission in those settings. In the absence of clear scientific data, the interim recommendations below have been developed on the basis of public health judgment, the historical use of facemasks and respirators in other settings for preventing transmission of influenza and other respiratory viruses, and on current information on the spread and severity of the H1N1/swine flu virus.

The risk for H1N1/swine flu virus infection can be reduced through a combination of actions. No single action will provide complete protection, but an approach combining the following steps can help decrease the likelihood of transmission.<sup>1</sup> These recommended actions are:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbows or sleeves. Coughing into hands can spread germs to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Hand sanitizer is an effective alternative.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Get seasonal flu vaccinations for the entire family.
- Avoid close contact (i.e. being within about 6 feet) with persons with influenza like illness.
- Stay home from school or work if sick. **Return to work when your fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications like Tylenol. Healthcare workers with direct patient contact should stay home for seven days from the time symptoms began or until they are fever-free for at least 24 hours, whichever is longer.**

### **The symptoms of influenza are:**

- ✓ Fever- low (99°) to high (104°), usually for 3 days, but may persist for 4 to 8 days. Sometimes fever will go away and return a day later
- ✓ Aching muscles
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Joint aches
- ✓ Eye pain
- ✓ Feeling very cold or having shaking chills
- ✓ Feeling very tired
- ✓ Sore throat, runny or stuffy nose

It is very hard to tell if someone who is sick has pandemic H1N1 flu or seasonal flu. Public health officials are **not** recommending laboratory tests. **Anyone who has the symptoms of flu-like illness should stay home and not go to work.**

If you want more information about masks, respirators and general influenza precautions, refer to the Monterey County Health Department Publication *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance: Pandemic Influenza Precautions*. This publication is available on the Health Department homepage. Information is also available on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)

### *How can I protect my staff from sick clients?*



#### *Hand Hygiene*

Influenza may be spread via contaminated hands. Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing and between clients.



#### *Routine Cleaning*

The virus can live on hard objects up to 8 hours. Flu viruses may be spread when a person touches a hard surface (such as a desk or doorknob) or an object (such as a keyboard or pen) where the virus has landed and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth. Routine cleaning of surfaces will help stop the virus from spreading in this way. Routinely clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas (e.g., alcohol-based wipes). Additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is not recommended.

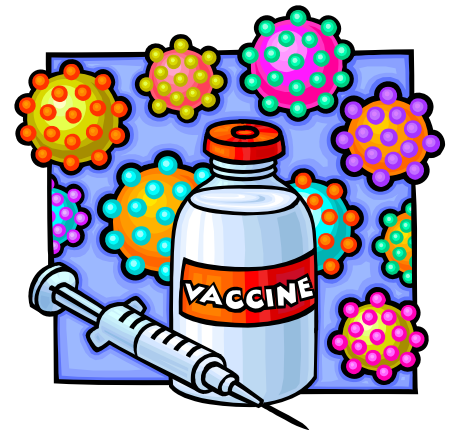


#### *Masks for coughing clients*

If you have clients who are coughing and/or sneezing, masking them is the best way to protect yourself and other clients/staff. Provide surgical masks at the reception area. There are *Cover Your Cough* posters available to print in various languages at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

### *Seasonal Influenza Vaccine*

**The single best way to protect against seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year.** The seasonal flu shot will not protect against a pandemic influenza but it will help Public Health authorities differentiate between seasonal and pandemic if the pandemic arrives during the “normal” flu season. The seasonal vaccine is available at healthcare providers and pharmacies.

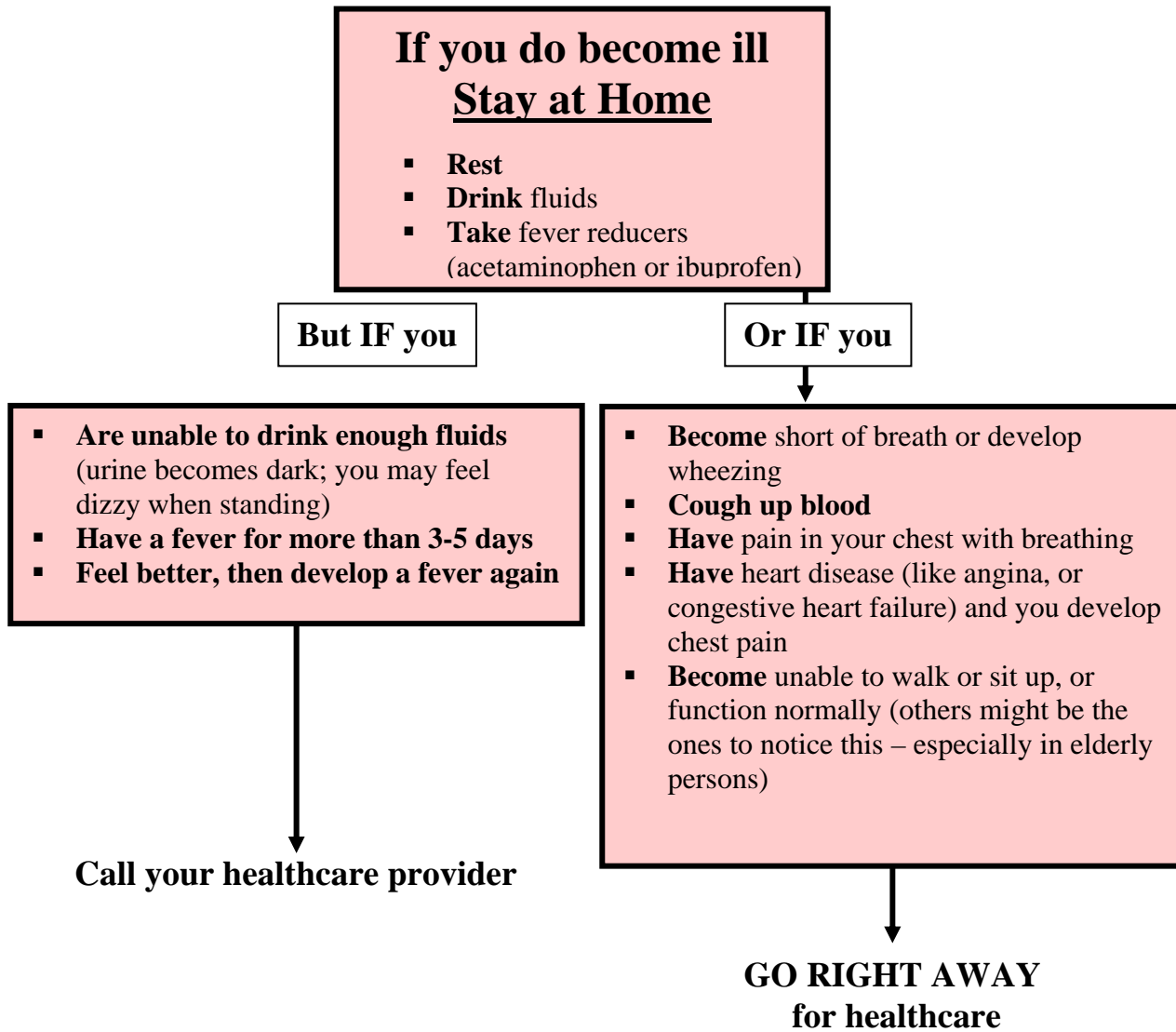


### *Pandemic H1N1/Swine Flu Vaccine*

There is **no** vaccine currently available to protect against the pandemic H1N1/swine flu. The vaccine is currently in clinical trials. The first shipments are expected in late October. It is expected that two shots given approximately three weeks apart will be required to provide good quality immunity.

***What should I do if I get sick?***

If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, including fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea, **you should stay home and avoid contact with other people**, except to seek medical care. Return to work when your fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of anti-fever medications like Tylenol. If you are a healthcare worker, you should stay home for 7 days from the time your symptoms began or until you are fever-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.



***More information***

For general pandemic H1N1/Swine questions call Monterey County 211.

**Websites of interest:**

The Centers for Disease Control – [www.cdc.gov/swineflu/](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/)

The World Health Organization - [www.who.int/csr/don/en/](http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/)

Monterey County Health Department – [www.co.monterey.ca.us/health](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/health)

The California Department of Public Health – [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov)

US Department of Health and Human Services – [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)