

Influenza and You

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

There is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus. However, a novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be ready for the public in the fall. As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against [seasonal influenza](#). There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- 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 hand cleaners*](#) are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, [CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

Other important actions that you can take are:

- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, [alcohol-based hand rubs*](#), tissues and other related items might be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious



What is the best way to keep from spreading the virus through coughing or sneezing?

If you are sick with flu-like illness, [CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

Keep away from others as much as possible. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the waste basket. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with novel H1N1 flu, should I go to work?

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with novel H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze.

Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.* If they become ill, they should notify their supervisor and stay home. Employees who have an underlying medical condition or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to prevent illness. For more information please see [General Business and Workplace Guidance for the Prevention of Novel Influenza A \(H1N1\) Flu in Workers](#).

What is the best technique for washing my hands to avoid getting the flu?

Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. Wash with soap and water or clean with [alcohol-based hand cleaner*](#). CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

What should I do if I get sick?

If you live in areas where people have been identified with novel H1N1 flu and 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. [CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone](#) except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Stay away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick. Staying at home means that you should not leave your home except to seek medical care. This means avoiding normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings.

If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

Influenza vaccines will be available this fall. MCHI will hold several vaccination clinics for the public to receive both the H1N1 vaccination and the seasonal influenza vaccination. Please be watching the newspaper and MCHI website for upcoming dates.

The CDC has recommendations available for everyone at its website: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>