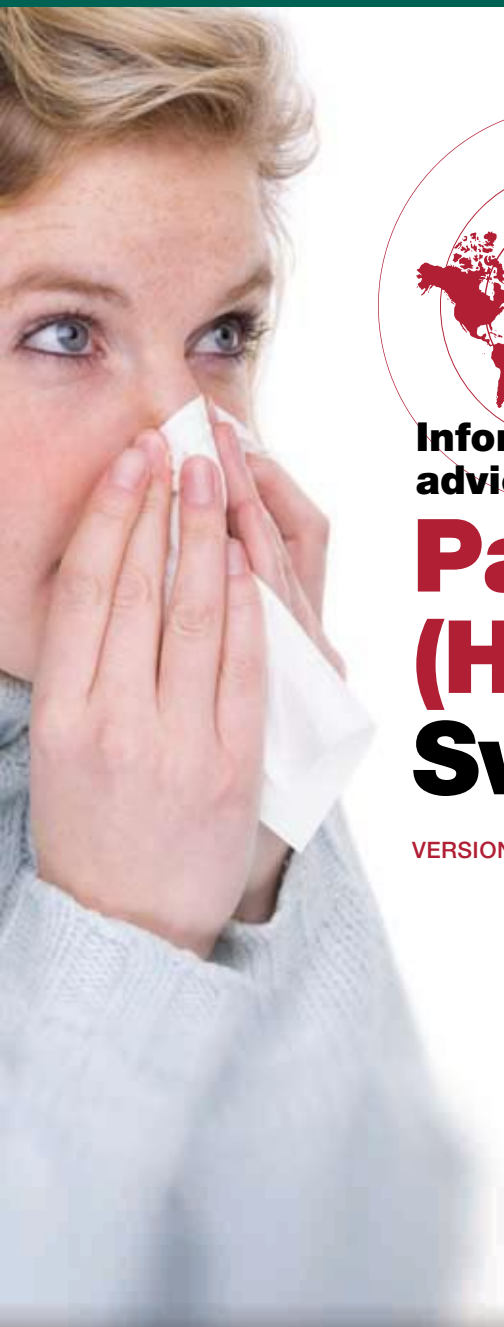


READ THIS LEAFLET VERY CAREFULLY, AND KEEP IT IN A SAFE PLACE.
FLU IS SPREADING IN IRELAND, AND THIS INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT
FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY.



**Information and medical
advice for the public on**

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Swine Flu

VERSION 2. UPDATED AUGUST 2009

about

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009



Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 or swine flu is a new flu virus which has been circulating worldwide since April. The World Health Organisation has declared this to be pandemic – a flu epidemic that spreads around the world.

You have an important role to play in helping to stop the flu spreading.

There are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself, your family and friends.

DOES THIS FLU SPREAD EASILY?

The new flu virus can spread quickly from person to person through tiny drops in coughs and sneezes. If you are close to a person with flu you can breathe them in and become infected. Droplets can also be passed from surfaces like door handles and hand rails.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE GOT THIS FLU?

The symptoms are like those of normal seasonal flu and include: fever that begins very suddenly, severe tiredness, a cough, a sore throat, aches and pains, a runny nose, and headache. Some people have vomiting and diarrhoea. While it is usually mild some people may develop complications such as pneumonia.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 AND THE COMMON COLD?

It can be difficult at times to distinguish between the common cold and influenza. The main difference is that the symptoms of influenza come on rapidly and are typically accompanied by muscle aches and a fever. The common cold has a more gradual onset and is associated with a runny nose and sneezing. An important additional feature of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 is that diarrhoea and vomiting occur occasionally. For a full list of differences between Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 and the common cold, refer to the table opposite.

identifying

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009



Symptoms	Pandemic (H1N1) 2009	Common Cold
Onset	Sudden	Slow
Fever	Characteristically high (38°C or higher/ 100°F or higher)	Rare
Headache	Prominent	Rare
General aches and pains	Usual, often severe	Rare
Fatigue, weakness	Can be prolonged for a number of weeks	Quite mild
Extreme exhaustion	Early and prominent	Never
Runny nose	Common	Common
Sneezing	Common	Usual
Sore throat	Common	Common
Cough	Common, can be severe	Mild to moderate, hacking cough
Diarrhoea, vomiting	Sometimes	Not associated with the common cold in adults

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET THE FLU?

If you get sick with a flu-like illness phone the HSE automated Flu Information Line on Freephone 1800 94 11 00, available 24 hours a day.

Listen to the symptoms of flu and the advice on caring for someone at home. You can also get this information on www.swineflu.ie.

Most people with flu will be able to recover at home within a few days without needing anti-viral medicine or medical care.

treating

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

HOW DO I CARE FOR SOMEONE WITH FLU AT HOME?

This flu mostly causes a mild to moderate illness. Most people do not need treatment with anti-viral medicine and are able to recover at home within a few days.

- Stay at home for up to 7 days or until you fully recover, do not go to work or school while ill.
- Take medicines such as paracetamol or ibuprofen to reduce the symptoms.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Discourage any visitors.
- Contact your GP surgery by telephone if you don't improve.

HIGHER RISK GROUPS

People who have very severe symptoms, or are in one of the high risk groups should contact their GP/family doctor by telephone if they get the flu.

People in high risk groups include:

- People whose immune system is reduced by disease or medication.
- People with chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver or neurological disease.
- People with Diabetes mellitus.
- People aged 65 years and older.
- Children under 5 years.
- People on medication for asthma.
- Severely obese people (Body Mass Index of 40 or more).
- Pregnant women.
- People with Haemoglobinopathies.

If you are in one of these groups and get flu symptoms, you should phone your GP surgery; your GP will decide if you need treatment. The GP may arrange for you to be seen at their surgery or may arrange a home visit. If the GP diagnoses you with flu, and you need anti-viral medicine, it can be picked up from any pharmacy free of charge on prescription.

treating

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

IF YOU ARE AN ADULT

If you have taken the basic care steps outlined above and you start to feel worse, or if after a few days you are not feeling better, you may need more advice from your doctor. Contact your GP surgery by phone if you notice:

- Shortness of breath at rest or while doing very little.
- Painful or difficult breathing.
- Coughing up bloody sputum.
- Drowsiness, disorientation or confusion.
- Fever for 4-5 days and not starting to get better (or getting worse).
- Starting to feel better then developing high fever and feeling unwell again.

IF YOU ARE CARING FOR A CHILD

You should contact your doctor by phone if you have taken the steps above and are still concerned that the child shows any of the following symptoms:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing.
- Bluish skin colour.
- Not drinking enough fluids.
- 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.
- Fever with a rash.

Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing



Dispose of dirty tissues quickly and carefully



Wash your hands frequently with soap and water



Wash hard surfaces such as kitchen worktops

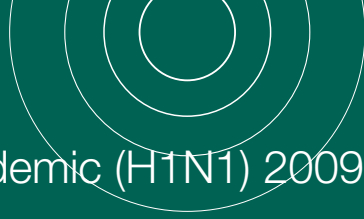


Avoid large crowds of people



preventing

the spread of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009



CARING FOR SOMEONE AT HOME

Most people with flu will recover after several days by following the basic steps outlined earlier. If you are at home with flu, or taking care of someone at home, follow these important tips to stop flu spreading:

- The person who has flu should stay in one room with the door closed and if possible with the window open.
- Other family members should try not to spend too much time with the person with flu, and should avoid sharing dishes, books, toys, etc.
- Avoid being face to face with the sick person.
- Discourage visits from persons not living in the household. This is important to stop flu from spreading to other people.
- People with flu should cover their nose and mouth with disposable tissues when sneezing or coughing. If you have no tissues immediately available, coughing or sneezing into your arm or sleeve (**not** into your hand) is recommended.
- Used tissues should be put by the ill person directly into a bin. Bin bags should be sealed in the room and taken directly outside by the carer for collection with regular rubbish.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, and especially after coughing and sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub (minimum 60% alcohol) frequently, including after every contact with the sick person or the person's room or bathroom.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth with hands as this also spreads flu virus.
- Surfaces and items inside the house should be cleaned regularly with bleach based household cleaners.
- When the vaccine is available and you are called make sure you get it to protect your family and yourself.

planning

for Pandemic (H1N1) 2009



PRACTICAL PLANS FOR YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD

If the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 becomes very widespread, it might affect people's day to day routines. Therefore it is a good idea to make practical plans for you, your family and your friends and neighbours.

- Think about how you would manage your childcare if schools closed, or if you get the flu and can't go to work.
- Think about making contact with neighbours who live alone, particularly older people.
- Identify a person you know, and talk to them about helping with collecting medicines, shopping for food or other essentials for you and your family if you aren't able to go out.
- In a serious flu outbreak, it makes sense to have a supply of basic necessities in the house, in case you are unwell and can't get to the shops.
- Make sure you have some simple items at home, like a thermometer and regular cold medicine like paracetamol or ibuprofen.

STAY HEALTHY

Stop the spread of infection by:

- Avoiding close contact with people who appear unwell and have fever and cough.
- Always carrying tissues.
- Always covering your nose and mouth with clean tissues, when coughing or sneezing. If you have no tissues immediately available, coughing or sneezing into your arm or sleeve (**not** into your hand) is recommended.
- Always disposing of used tissues into a bin immediately.
- Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol based hand cleaners regularly.
- Cleaning surfaces regularly with bleach based household cleaners to get rid of germs.

further information

about Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

There are plans to offer pandemic flu vaccine to the population when it becomes available later this year.

Telephone

Further Information is available from the HSE Flu Information Line.

The Flu Information Line is available 24 hours a day and is your primary source of information on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

Freephone 1800 94 11 00

Websites

The HSE's Website is updated every day with latest information and advice. Check it often.

Health Service Executive

www.swineflu.ie

Department of Health and Children

www.dohc.ie

Information for Health Professionals is on

www.hpsc.ie

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