

What Pregnant Women Should Know About H1N1 Virus (formerly called swine flu)

What is this new virus?

Novel H1N1 (“swine flu”) is a new influenza virus making many people sick. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. The virus is spreading from person to person worldwide, in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

While many infections with the H1N1 virus are mild, some people infected with this virus have become quite ill or have died. ***More than half of the people requiring hospitalization have been pregnant or also had other medical conditions.*** In addition, evidence from past flu pandemics (1918 and 1957) suggests that pregnant women are likely to be at increased risk for complications. These complications may include early labor or severe pneumonia. We don’t know if this virus will do the same, but it should be taken very seriously.

What can I do to protect myself, my baby and my family?

Take these everyday steps to help prevent the spread of germs and protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or sneeze into your sleeve. 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 good to use.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people (if you are pregnant and you live or have close contact with someone who has H1N1 flu, talk to your doctor about medicines to prevent flu).

What are symptoms of H1N1?

Symptoms are like seasonal flu and include the following:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headaches
- Chills and fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

What should I do if I get sick?

- If there is H1N1 flu in your community, pay extra attention to your body and how you are feeling.
- ***If you get sick with flu-like symptoms, call your doctor. Your doctor will decide if testing or treatment is needed.***
- If you are alone at anytime, have someone check in with you often if you are feeling sick.
- If you have close contact with someone who has flu or is being treated for exposure to flu, contact your doctor to discuss whether you need treatment to reduce your chances of getting flu.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, the CDC recommends that you stay home at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to seek medical care. Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

When should I get emergency medical care?

If you have any of these signs, seek medical care right away:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or sudden pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- A high fever that is not responding to Tylenol



If you have questions or would like more information, please call your doctor.

References: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *What Pregnant Women should know About H1N1.* May 2009. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Novel H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You.* August 2009.