

**HOW TO BEST PROTECT
YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND OTHER FELLOW CITIZENS FROM
THE SWINE FLU (H1N1)**

Educated easy steps that you can take yourself to guard against swine flu (h1n1):

First of all, please know that the symptoms of influenza A (H1N1) are no different from that of the regular human 'flu.

PLEASE DO NOT PANIC! By panicking, you lose your sense of reason and any epidemic gets worse if people panic!

NOTE: The H1N1 strain of flu that is currently doing its rounds is a **mild variant and is usually NOT FATAL!**

DO THE FOLLOWING:

Among household members (includes family, friends, relatives and those who visit your household (for work))

Keep a close watch for the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Nose block/stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills and fatigue

Infants in the family (<1 year old)

in addition to all of the above symptoms

- irritability
- inability to feed,
- vomiting

Take Note of

- if any of member(s) of your family has travelled abroad within last 10 days.
- if you have had any visitors from outside of India in the last 10 days?
- if any of them had any of the symptoms of 'flu?
- What happened to their symptoms afterwards?

If the answer is YES to any of the symptoms then

The affected person **must:**

1. Stay home, take rest and try to be as isolated as possible. Drink plenty of fluids wear a mask. Keep a distance of **6 feet** to reduce transmission of infection through coughing or sneezing. Use disposable tissues if possible for cleaning nose and dispose used tissues in the trash.

2. Clean your hands each time you touch your nose/secretions from your mouth/nose. Or use a hand sanitizer each time. Or else just wash your hands with soap and water. This has to be done meticulously EACH time!
3. If you must use a hanky, put away the hanky each time in your pocket and clean your hands EACH time as above. Wash the clothes and hanky with detergent as usual.
4. When you cough use a tissue or **cough into your own sleeve** while covering your mouth. Treat with Crocin for fever (>100°F) as and when required. This will help with the fever and body pain or headache.

Do not use any aspirin for fever.

This is the general rule for ALL viral infections, not just in this era of H1N1.
It can lead to some dangerous complications.

For treatment of children

- Try to talk to your pediatricians. It is better if you would do so on the phone. Remember that going to a crowded clinic/hospital facility also increases your exposure to any disease including H1N1.
- Clean toys, surfaces and articles of affected individuals with bleach or alcohol. Wash your hands with soap and water after doing this.
- It is well-known that an untreated cold last for 7 days while a treated one lasts a week! (No difference at all as you can see!)

But if symptoms last for more than 4 days or if you think symptoms are worsening do contact your doctor for ruling out further infection or H1N1

NOTE:

The affected family member and other members/contacts of the affected family member are **'in quarantine'**.

They are obligated to stay at home and avoid contact with all other individuals for a period of 7 days – this is the duration of infectivity of the 'flu.

Even if the affected member in the family does not have the swine 'flu, they should stay home for 7 days, counted from the day they started showing the symptoms.

If symptoms last longer than 7 days, they should stay home until they have been symptom-free for at least 24-hours.

IN GENERAL (during the epidemic)

Stay at home as much as possible.

Specifically, stay away from closed, overcrowded and indoor spaces such as cinemas, malls, enclosed shops, restaurants, classrooms and overcrowded places, wherever they might be e.g. overcrowded closed lifts etc. NOTE: Even with a mask it is not advisable to go to such places.

Don't visit friends, family or have any of them over to your house until the epidemic has subsided. Children should not be sent for tuitions/art/sport classes till the epidemic dies out.

If you **MUST** go out, please **USE A MASK**..... (A routine surgical mask is more than sufficient and will protect transmission of germs from an infected person (recent scientifically proven data) – it does NOT HAVE TO BE ONLY THE N95 masks that you are hearing about on TV!)

Doing all the above is our duty as human beings in the interest of public health. It is definitely in our own interest and that of our loved ones! Be a good citizen and do your duty by passing on this message to our less fortunate and less educated community members! Let us all cooperate in an educated and coordinated manner to put an end to this epidemic!

A few general tips

- **ISOLATION** is mandatory and not an option if we are to contain this epidemic. This is the responsibility of each one of us.
- **Wearing a mask** is not an option either. This is for our own safety.
- Avoid shaking hands (surest way to contact infection).
- Go back to Namaste!
- Sneeze into your chest or shoulder if you don't have a tissue handy. This area is least likely to come in contact with others. DON'T use hanky's.

Precautions against Flu - WHO Guidelines

WHO guidelines on Swine Flu - What can I do?

What can I do to protect myself from catching influenza A(H1N1)?

The main route of transmission of the new influenza A(H1N1) virus seems to be similar to seasonal influenza, via droplets that are expelled by speaking, sneezing or coughing.

You can prevent getting infected by avoiding close contact with people who show influenza-like symptoms (trying to maintain a distance of about 1 meter if possible) and taking the following measures:

- Avoid touching your mouth and nose;
- Clean hands thoroughly with soap and water, or cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub on a regular basis (especially if touching the mouth and nose, or surfaces that are potentially contaminated);
- Avoid close contact with people who might be ill;
- Reduce the time spent in crowded settings if possible;
- Improve airflow in your living space by opening windows;
- Practice good health habits including adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, and keeping physically active.

FAQ on SWINE FLU

What about using a mask? What does WHO recommend?

If you are not sick you do not have to wear a mask.

If you are caring for a sick person, you can wear a mask when you are in close contact with the ill person and dispose of it immediately after contact, and cleanse your hands thoroughly afterwards.

When and how to use a mask?

If you are sick and must travel or be around others, cover your mouth and nose.

Using a mask correctly in all situations is essential. Incorrect use actually increases the chance of spreading infection.

How do I know if I have influenza A(H1N1)?

You will not be able to tell the difference between seasonal flu and influenza A(H1N1) without medical help. Typical symptoms to watch for are similar to seasonal viruses and include fever, cough, headache, body aches, sore throat and runny nose. Only your medical practitioner and local health authority can confirm a case of influenza A(H1N1).

What should I do if I think I have the illness?

If you feel unwell, have high fever, cough or sore throat: stay at home and keep away from work, school or crowds; rest and take plenty of fluids; cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and, if using tissues, make sure you dispose of them carefully. Clean your hands immediately after with soap and water or cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub;

if you do not have a tissue close by when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth as much as possible with the crook of your elbow;

use a mask to help you contain the spread of droplets when you are around others, but be sure to do so correctly; inform family and friends about your illness and try to avoid contact with other people;

If possible, contact a health professional before traveling to a health facility to discuss whether a medical examination is necessary.

Should I take an antiviral now just in case I catch the new virus?

No. You should only take an antiviral, such as oseltamivir or zanamivir, if your health care provider (Dr.) advises you to do so. Individuals should not buy medicines to prevent or fight this new influenza without a prescription

When should someone seek medical care?

A person should seek medical care if they experience shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or if a fever continues more than three days. For parents with a young child who is ill, seek medical care if a child has fast or labored breathing, continuing fever or convulsions (seizures).

Supportive care at home - resting, drinking plenty of fluids and using a pain reliever for aches - is adequate for

recovery in most cases. (A non-aspirin pain reliever should be used by children and young adults because of the risk of Reye's syndrome.)

Should I go to work if I have the flu but am feeling OK?

No. Whether you have influenza A(H1N1) or a seasonal influenza, you should stay home and away from work through the duration of your symptoms. This is a precaution that can protect your work colleagues and others.

Can I travel?

If you are feeling unwell or have symptoms of influenza, you should not travel. If you have any doubts about your health, you should check with your health care provider.

Preventive Measure

Hand Hygiene is one of the most important activity and it helps arrest the infection. Hence high traffic zones like schools, offices, malls, multiplexes...should ideally provide good hand hygiene facilities and help arrest the infection.

Precaution against the Spread of Swine Flu for Children

There have been many inquiries about the precautions we are taking to prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus through school. I am sure that all of you have also been following the newspapers and the suggestions and recommendations. We need to note the following:

1. There is no need to panic. The virus is mild and easily curable with available drugs.
2. Schools should not close down without adequate reason.
3. Any school children who have recently returned from traveling abroad (within last 10 days) should undergo a quarantine period of seven days at home.
4. If a child is unwell (cold and cough and fever) then it is the parents who have to be alert and NOT send the child to school. Please consult your doctor. It is the doctor's duty and responsibility to advise you on the proper course of action.
5. If a child is returning to school after ANY **illness** then we will require a Doctor's Certificate (acceptable to the Health Department) BEFORE we allow the child in to class. Without this certificate the child will be sent back.
6. Parents must use the space in the communication book to give us information about absence.
7. If anyone does test positive, do keep the school informed. There need be no GUILT feeling attached. Your information will help all of us.

Most important is to be alert and keep our judgment unclouded. As adults we are ALL responsible for the well-being of our children and their friends

Dr. Gouri Sastry, ,
MD, MPH (PUBLIC HEALTH EXPERT),
Consultant to Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, has sent us some more practical measures.