

What are the symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in people?

The symptoms are like those of regular seasonal flu and include: fever of sudden onset, cough, sore throat, runny nose, headache and muscle aches. Some people have vomiting and diarrhoea. In severe cases, pneumonia may develop and a small number of people have died from this virus.

Does this flu spread easily? The new flu virus appears to be highly contagious and 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 long does the virus live on surfaces?

The flu virus can live on a hard surface for up to 24 hours, and a soft surface for around 20 minutes.

What should I do if I get sick? If you get sick with a flu-like illness, and have visited an affected area in the seven days prior to becoming ill or have been in contact with a known case of Pandemic (H1N1) 2009, contact your GP/family doctor by telephone. They will decide if you need testing or treatment. You should stay at home while ill unless needing further care.

How do I care for myself or someone else at home? Stay at home for up to 7 days or until you fully recover

- Discourage any visitors
- Take medicines such as paracetamol or ibuprofen to reduce the symptoms
- Drink plenty of fluids

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 doctor 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

If a caregiver must have close contact with the sick person (for example, to hold a sick infant), spend the least amount of time possible in close contact and wear a facemask when entering the sick room. Avoid being face-to-face with the sick person. When holding small children who are sick, place their chin on your shoulder so that they will not cough in your face. All persons in the household should clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub (minimum 60% alcohol) frequently.

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.

Who are those considered to be in a high risk group and needing treatment?

People who have: chronic lung, heart, kidney, liver, or neurological disease; people whose immune system is reduced by disease or medications; people with diabetes mellitus; people aged 65 years and older; **children under 5 (children under 2 are at particular risk of influenza)**; people on medication for asthma, severely obese people (body mass index more than 40) and pregnant women.

Will any contacts of cases require preventative anti-viral therapy?

In general preventative treatment is not recommended for contracts. However in exceptional circumstances doctors may decide to prescribe preventative treatment.

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
- Always disposing of used tissues into a bin immediately
- Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol based hand cleaners regularly
- Clean surfaces regularly to get rid of germs

What other things can I do to reduce the risk of illness spread during a pandemic?

Advice has been made available to ensure that the public are kept informed as to the up-to-date situation in Ireland. There is comprehensive guidance for the public in [The National Pandemic Influenza Plan](#) available on HSE website. This document advises on what you can do in the situation that a pandemic has been declared.

24 Hour HSE Flu Information Line Freephone 1800 94 11 00