

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)

Information for the general public

7pm Thursday 21 May 2009

Introduction

Cases of a H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) virus have been identified in a broad spread of countries across the world, including Australia.

The pandemic alert level has been raised by the World Health Organization to phase 5. The Australian Government pandemic alert is in the delay phase.

This fact sheet is intended to answer some questions you may have.

The illness

What is H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza)?

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) is a respiratory disease caused by a new influenza virus.

How does H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) spread?

Spread of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) virus is thought to be happening the same way seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing.

Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. However, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.

What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)?

The symptoms of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) in people are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhoea and vomiting associated with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu).

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How can someone with this influenza infect someone else?

Definitive information regarding the mode of transmission of H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) is not yet

available, however it seems likely that it shares the same transmission dynamics as seasonal influenza – i.e. it is most commonly spread from person-to-person by inhalation of infectious droplets produced while talking, coughing and sneezing. Transmission may also occur through direct and indirect (fomite) contact.

The virus may persist on hard surfaces for 1-2 days, particularly in cold or low humidity conditions.

The virus may remain viable on hands for 5 minutes.

How long can viruses live outside the body?

We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as tables, doorknobs and desks. Frequent handwashing will reduce the chance of contamination from these common surfaces.

Are there medicines to treat H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Flu)?

DHS recommends the use of antiviral medication for the treatment of infection with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) viruses.

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started soon after getting sick (within two days of symptoms appearing).

In certain circumstances these drugs are also used to prevent influenza developing.

Supply of these drugs HAS NOT been restricted by the Government.

Drug companies have assured that there are stocks of these drugs in Australia.

Retail warehouses have temporarily run out of stock and supply should resume shortly.

How long can an infected person spread H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) to others?

People with H1N1 Influenza 09 (Human Swine Influenza) virus should be considered potentially contagious as long as they are symptomatic and for up to seven days following illness onset.

Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: Visit www.health.vic.gov.au
Call the Swine Influenza Hotline Tel 180 2007**

Call Nurse-on-Call Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)