

Outbreak Notice

Novel H1N1 Flu: Global Situation

This information is current as of today, October 07, 2009 at 11:02 EDT

Updated: July 09, 2009

Announcement:

Possible Novel H1N1 Flu Screening for International Travelers

Current Situation

Novel H1N1 flu cases have been reported in many countries around the world, with most of the cases being reported from the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Overall, the numbers of new cases of novel H1N1 flu in Mexico and the United States appears to be declining. However, outbreaks continue to be reported in some communities.

In the Southern Hemisphere, the normal flu season typically occurs sometime during April-September, and some countries in the Southern Hemisphere are reporting increasing numbers of cases of novel H1N1 flu.

On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) raised the worldwide pandemic alert level to [Phase 6](#) in response to the ongoing global spread of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus. A Phase 6 alert level means that a global pandemic is underway and that there are now ongoing community level outbreaks in multiple parts of world. The Phase 6 pandemic alert level is a reflection of the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. For more information, see [CDC's H1N1 Flu](#) website.

Health authorities around the world are monitoring the situation. As the situation changes, further information and travel recommendations related to this outbreak will be posted on [the CDC Travelers' Health website](#).

For the most up-to-date information about case numbers and where they are occurring, visit the following websites:

- **United States:** [CDC H1N1 Flu website](#)
- **Mexico:** [Secretaria de Salud / Secretary of Health, Mexico](#) (webpage in Spanish)
- **Canada:** Public Health Agency of Canada [Surveillance—Cases of H1N1 Flu Virus in Canada](#)
- **Other country case numbers:** [World Health Organization Influenza A \(H1N1\) website](#) and [Pan American Health Organization](#)

Basic Information about Novel H1N1 Flu

The novel H1N1 flu virus is unique, because it is a combination of genes from pig (swine), bird, and human flu viruses. People who are infected usually have flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

Even though some severe illnesses and deaths from novel H1N1 flu have been reported, most cases have been similar to seasonal flu and have not resulted in severe illness. Most cases have occurred in children and younger adults.

Recommendations for Travel to Areas Reporting Novel H1N1 Flu

CDC recommends that travelers at high risk for complications from any form of flu discuss their travel plans with their doctor. Together, they should look carefully at the H1N1 flu situation in their destination and the available health-care options in the area. They should discuss their specific health situations and possible increased risk of traveling to the area affected by novel H1N1 flu.

Travelers at high risk for complications include:

- Children less than 5 years of age
- Persons aged 65 years or older
- Children and adolescents (less than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection
- Pregnant women
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders
- Adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV)

Healthy people may make travel plans as they normally would and take common sense precautions to protect their health during travel.

Before Your Trip

If you are planning travel to an area where cases of novel H1N1 flu are being reported, the following recommendations will help you reduce your risk of infection and stay healthy.

Prepare for your trip

- Stay informed. Check updates from the sources listed in the “Current Situation” section above.
- Be sure you are up-to-date with all your [routine vaccinations](#), including seasonal influenza vaccine, when available.

- Find out about the other health risks and travel recommendations for your [destination](#).
- Pack a [travel health kit](#) that contains basic first aid and medical supplies.
- Identify the health-care resources in the area(s) you will be visiting.
- Find out if your health insurance plan will cover medical care during your trip; many insurance companies do NOT cover these costs.
 - CDC recommends purchasing additional insurance that covers medical care costs during international travel and medical evacuation.
 - For more information, see [Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad](#) from the U.S. Department of State.
 - Remember that U.S. embassies, consulates and military facilities do not evacuate or give medications, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens during international travel.

Check your own health

Do not travel if you are sick.

If you have flu-like symptoms, you should stay home and avoid travel for 7 days after you get sick or for at least 24 hours after you stop having symptoms, whichever is longer. This is to keep others from getting the virus.

- Symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.
- Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting.

During Your Trip

Follow local guidelines

- Pay attention to announcements from the local government and monitor the local health and security situation.
- Follow any movement restrictions and prevention recommendations.
- Be aware that some countries are checking the health of arriving and/or exiting passengers and screening them for illness due to novel H1N1 flu to prevent others from getting sick. For more information, see the [Possible International Travel Delays Due to Novel H1N1 Flu Screening Procedures](#) announcement.

Practice healthy habits to help stop the spread of novel H1N1 flu

- Wash your hands often with soap and running water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
 - Use alcohol-based hand gels (containing at least 60% alcohol) when soap is not available and hands are not visibly dirty.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and put your used tissue in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.

What to do if you feel sick

- It is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care.
- If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, seek medical care.
- A U.S. consular officer can help you find local medical care in a foreign country. To contact the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country you are visiting, call Overseas Citizens Services at:
 - 1-888-407-4747 if calling from the U.S. or Canada,
 - 00-1-202-501-4444 if calling from other countries, or
 - Visit [Websites of U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Diplomatic Mission](#) to find the contact information for the local U.S. Embassy of the country you are visiting.
- Avoid further travel for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and running water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand gels are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Follow all local health recommendations. For example, if you are sick, you may be asked to put on a surgical mask to protect others or to stay in your home or hotel to prevent the spread of novel H1N1 flu.
- For more information about what to do if you become sick while you are traveling outside the United States, visit [Your Survival Guide for Safe and Healthy Travel](#).

For information on CDC's recommendations for antiviral use during the novel H1N1 flu outbreak, please visit [CDC's Interim Guidance on Antiviral Recommendations for Patients with Novel Influenza A \(H1N1\) Virus Infection and Their Close Contacts](#).

After Your Trip

- Closely monitor your health for 7 days.
- If you become ill with fever and other symptoms of novel H1N1 flu such as a cough, sore throat, and possibly vomiting and diarrhea, see the information in the section above titled "[What to do if you get sick](#)" and the [What to Do If You Get Flu-Like Symptoms](#) page on the [CDC H1N1 Flu website](#).

Additional Information

If you have specific questions about novel H1N1 flu cases see the [Contact CDC webpage](#) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

To learn more about travel health, visit the [CDC Travelers' Health website](#).

Novel H1N1 flu travel health updates will be posted on the [CDC Travelers' Health website](#) as information becomes available.