
FACTSHEET

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Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
Ministry of Health Services

DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT THE H1N1 FLU VIRUS

How will I know how soon I can get the H1N1 vaccine?

The pandemic H1N1 vaccine has been approved by Health Canada regulators and is now available to all British Columbians who need and want to be immunized.

It's expected that all British Columbians who need and want the H1N1 vaccine will be able to receive it before Christmas. To find out where to get the vaccine in your area, you can visit www.immunizebc.ca and click on the Flu Clinic Locator.

People have died from H1N1. Does that mean the virus is more severe?

No, the World Health Organization still considers the pandemic to be one of moderate severity, which means that most people recover without hospitalization.

It was expected that British Columbia would see some deaths caused by or associated with the H1N1 flu virus, but so far, illness caused by the H1N1 flu virus is not substantially different than regular seasonal influenza, although it is predominantly affecting younger age groups. And while it is a rare occurrence, seasonal flu can cause serious illness or even death in patients who have underlying medical conditions.

Seasonal flu and pneumonia result in 400-800 deaths in B.C. each year.

I think I was exposed to the H1N1 flu virus. Do I need to get Tamiflu?

Tamiflu is a prescription medication, and should **only** be taken if prescribed by a doctor. Those at high-risk for contracting or suffering complications from the H1N1 flu virus, include:

- Women who are in their second or third trimester of pregnancy or four weeks post-partum during the flu season
- People at any age with underlying health conditions, and especially those with asthma, diabetes and morbid obesity
- Young children (under 5 years of age) and children with chronic health conditions as they seem to be a highest risk for hospitalization

If you fall into one of the groups considered at high-risk for contracting or suffering complications from the H1N1 flu virus, during one of your regular doctor visits, work with your doctor to determine whether you should be prescribed antivirals in advance for use in the event you show H1N1 flu symptoms.

When you get this prescription, **do not fill it right away**. If you get flu-like symptoms, call your doctor and find out if they suspect your symptoms could be caused by the H1N1 flu virus. If so, they will then give you the go ahead to get the prescription filled.

When this happens, send your friend or a “flu buddy” to the pharmacy to pick up the prescription for you so that you don’t risk getting other people sick.

Someone coughed on me in the line up at the grocery store. Can I get the H1N1 flu virus?

Like all flu viruses, H1N1 is spread through droplets, but just being coughed on doesn’t mean you will get the H1N1 flu virus.

If you start to have flu-like symptoms (cough, fever, headache, general aches and fatigue) the best thing you can do to protect yourself and others is to stay home from school and work until you’re feeling better. Make sure to wash your hands often. Alcohol based hand sanitizers are also effective.

If kids get sick at school, will there be widespread school closures?

Based on the experience to date and information from other sources about the current H1N1 situation, public health officials in B.C. do not anticipate that closures of individual schools, community-wide closures, or province-wide closures will be indicated or useful for controlling the transmission and impact of H1N1.

While the situation is evolving and more cases are expected to be confirmed in the coming days and weeks, public health officials have been clear that, presently, this H1N1 flu virus looks more and more like seasonal flu.

Should regular members of the public be wearing masks?

No. In fact, for the general public, the benefits of wearing a mask remain unproven. If you do have to travel outside the home while you have flu symptoms, wearing a simple surgical mask will help protect **others** from your coughing.

The best thing is to do is to cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze and wash your hands often with soap and water. It’s the simplest and most effective way to prevent spreading the virus.

If I’m a caregiver treating someone with influenza, should I wear a mask?

Caregivers who are treating someone with the flu (seasonal or H1N1) and patients who have the flu and are being cared for would both benefit from wearing a mask, especially if the patient has a chronic underlying medical condition.

If you are treating someone with the flu, the wearing of masks by affected persons will limit their ability to spread virus.

Can you get the H1N1 flu virus from eating pork or pork products?

Proper cooking of pork products would kill any viruses. Additionally, swine exhibiting symptoms of influenza would not pass tests to enter into the food market.

Where can I get more information?

You can call [HealthLink BC](#) at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or are concerned about any illness/symptoms you're experiencing.

To find out where to get your H1N1 flu vaccine, use the Flu Clinic Locator at www.immunizebc.ca. For the latest facts on the H1N1 flu virus, visit www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1.

