



H1N1 (Swine) flu: What parents need to know and do

Parents are advised to:

- a) Have a child care plan in place should students be dismissed from school.
- b) Make sure the school has your current contact information on file.
- c) Teach children proper personal hygiene to protect themselves and others.

News of H1N1 (swine) flu can be unsettling for many parents. The reports of H1N1 hospitalizations and deaths in Alameda County might lead some parents to have concern as babies and young children are often vulnerable during a serious flu outbreak. According to health officials and pediatricians, parents should be aware and concerned, but not panicked.

What exactly is H1N1? It is a novel or new virus that includes genetic matter from pigs, birds and humans. The virus was first seen in Mexico in March 2009 and in the U.S. in April. In June, the World Health Organization declared H1N1 a pandemic because of the number of cases across the world. Because the virus is new, no one has resistance (immunity). And because it is new, we do not know how the virus will behave in the winter. Therefore, parents are advised to be prepared for any scenario.

What are the symptoms? The symptoms are similar to seasonal flu: fever, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. If your child or anyone in your family has the flu, they should **stay at home for 24 hours after the fever is gone** to avoid exposing other children and school staff. **If your child has a fever for 3 days, contact your child's doctor.**

If you need a doctor for your child, call the Public Health Clearinghouse at **1 888 604-4636**.

Should my children be washing their hands more than usual? Yes. This is the best way to prevent the spread of a flu virus. Your child should also know to cover their cough and sneezes, and avoid sharing food with other children.

Should my child get the H1N1 flu vaccine? Yes, but talk to your child's doctor first. If you don't know where to take your child for the H1N1 vaccine, call the Immunization Assistance Program at (510)267-3230 for help.

Can I feed my child pork? Yes. People do not get H1N1 by eating pork. The virus is spread by human-to-human contact only.

Is it safe to travel? Yes, but check the [Centers for Disease Control](http://www.cdc.gov) for current travel advisories and updates.

If my child gets the virus can he or she be treated? Yes, with antiviral (Tamiflu) medicine. Scientists are working on a vaccine that should be available in mid-October. Check with your child's doctor for advice on the vaccine.