

H1N1 (Swine Flu) Virus

Heading into the flu season, the H1N1 virus, also known as the swine flu, is again a major concern for patients and employers. Due to the numerous questions we have received regarding the H1N1 (swine flu) virus, the H1N1 vaccine, and additional ways to protect against the virus, we offer employers and employees some helpful information about reducing the spread of the virus and staying healthy.

About the H1N1 (swine flu):

H1N1 (swine flu), like the common flu, is caused by Type A influenza and is a respiratory disease that originated in pigs. Humans can become infected with the virus by coming into contact with humans or pigs carrying swine flu. It is important to note that you cannot get swine flu from eating pork. This is an airborne illness, spread through coughing and sneezing.

Symptoms:

Those infected by the H1N1 virus (swine flu) may experience common flu symptoms such as fatigue, lack of appetite, cough, runny nose, fever over 100.4, muscle aches, and sometimes nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Vaccine:

The 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. Currently, an Oct. 15 rollout date has been set, with only 45 million doses initially available in the first distribution. At that time, priority patients will be able to receive the vaccine first based on their higher risk of complications, according to regulations set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information about Concentra's vaccine distribution, please see our H1N1 FAQ.

These target groups include:

- pregnant women
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- health care and emergency medical services personnel
- persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old
- people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 (swine flu) because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

Every state is developing a vaccine delivery plan. Vaccines will be available in a combination of settings such as vaccination clinics organized by local health departments, health care provider offices, schools, and other private settings, such as pharmacies and workplaces. Due to supplier productivity issues and decreased production, we cannot guarantee that vaccines will be available for all patients and employers in the first distribution.

Recommendation

If employees are not feeling well, and are experiencing fever and flu-like symptoms, they should leave work so as not to infect others, and seek medical attention for worsening symptoms. Those who present with flu symptoms should stay home and avoid contact with others.

Prevention and available resources:

To lower your risk of getting the flu, or any other virus, you should:

Avoid people who are ill

If possible, practice social distancing (6 feet), including limiting access to public places, conducting phone conferences rather than face-to-face meetings, consider eating lunch at your desk rather than in large break room settings

Keep work stations clean and sanitized

Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use hand sanitizers

Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing, then immediately dispose of the tissue in a trash receptacle

Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth

Treatment

Patients with a mild case of the H1N1 virus (swine flu) should stay home from work or school, get plenty of rest, drink plenty of liquids, and use pain relievers to treat fever and body aches. Children under 18 should not be given aspirin if they have a fever. Because the majority of H1N1 cases are mild, the illness often subsides after several days without the use of antiviral medications.

The use of antiviral medications to treat H1N1 (swine flu) should be reserved for persons at a higher risk for influenza-related complications, who have been exposed to the influenza virus. Patients who do not fall into a high risk group or do not require hospitalization for H1N1 (swine flu) do not require antiviral medications for treatment or prevention. Just like treating a common cold, the overuse of antiviral medications for mild cases can cause the virus to become resistant to treatment and deplete medical resources intended for more severe cases.

Concentra offers a series of comprehensive Flu Safety materials to assist companies in planning for business continuity and employee safety in the upcoming flu season. For more information about the H1N1 virus, including FREE materials that you can download to help communicate health safety habits to your employees, visit www.Concentra.com. As always, the health and safety of your employees is our primary concern.