

**Novel H1N1 Flu**  
**(sometimes called "Swine" Flu)**  
11/06/09

**Steuben County Public Health H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Clinics**

Steuben County Public Health is receiving numerous calls from every part of the community regarding clinics. Per CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and New York State guidelines, we must offer clinics to the "targeted" groups first and then we can vaccinate the general public. With that being said, each county has unique characteristics (rural vs., city, population size, geographic spread, resources, supply of vaccine, etc.) that make this a challenge.

**General Information**

Human cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus have been identified in the United States. As of 10/22/09, influenza-like illness is widespread in New York State and Steuben County as well. Many schools are experiencing influenza-like illness. Steuben County Public Health is working closely with the New York State Department of Health to stay current with this developing situation. Information is being shared with health care providers and Steuben residents as information is available.

**What is swine flu?**

Swine influenza, also called novel H1N1 or swine flu, is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it's possible for swine flu viruses to spread from person to person.

**Can people catch swine flu from eating pork?**

NO! Swine influenza viruses are NOT transmitted by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork and pork products, is safe. Cooking pork to an internal temperature of 160°F kills the swine flu virus as it does other bacteria and viruses.

**How soon will I get sick if exposed to the flu?**

The time from when a person is exposed to flu virus to when symptoms actually begin is about one to four days, with an average of about two days.

## **How long is a person with flu virus contagious?**

The period when an infected person is contagious depends on the age and health of the person. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others from 1 day prior to onset of symptoms to 5 days after they first become ill. Some may be contagious for longer than a week. In fact, children may be contagious for 10 days.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of H1N1 flu in people?**

Symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular human influenza. They include:

- Fever of 100°F, or greater
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue (weariness, tiredness, or lack of energy)
- Some people have reported having diarrhea and vomiting, however, these are **NOT** usual symptoms of seasonal flu.

Just as seasonal flu, H1N1 flu symptoms can vary in severity from mild to severe illness and may cause worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions. The illness caused by this virus has been relatively mild in most individuals who are otherwise healthy.

The H1N1 flu virus has affected the younger population, whereas, the seasonal flu usually affects the older population. This new flu virus easily passes from person to person.

## **Who is at higher risk for flu complications?**

- People who are 65 or older, under age 5, or pregnant
- People with chronic lung problems, such as asthma or emphysema
- People with chronic heart, kidney, liver or blood disorders
- People with neurological disorders that can cause breathing problems
- People with diabetes
- People whose immune systems are weakened due to illness or medication
- People under 18 years who are on long-term aspirin therapy

In some instances, an antiviral medication may be prescribed for those individuals who are at higher risk for flu complications, are ill and/or for those in close contact with ill individuals. If you are at higher risk for flu and are experiencing symptoms, call your doctor.

### **What do people need to know and do if they become ill?**

If you are ill with flu-like symptoms including sore throat, cough, runny nose, and fever, and possibly diarrhea and vomiting, PLEASE stay home from work or school and do not attend public gathering. You should remain at home for 24 hrs. AFTER your fever is gone, without using fever-reducing to make it go away. Follow recommendations for seasonal flu illness, such as keeping hydrated with fluids and getting plenty of rest.

Most illness is relatively mild to moderate and most individuals can successfully remain at home, treating symptoms. However, at any time you feel the symptoms of your illness become severe, such as difficulty breathing, you should seek medical care. Please call your health care provider before you go.

### **What can you do to protect yourself or others from getting sick?**

Every day actions that prevent the spread of illness are recommended. These include:

- Good respiratory hygiene such as covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough and sneeze. Throw the used tissue in the trash.
- In the absence of a tissue, cover coughs and sneezes with the inside of your arm. **Do not cough/sneeze into your hands.**
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently, but especially after coughing and sneezing. Use paper towels to dry hands and then turn faucet off with towel before throwing it in the trash.
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective (containing at least 60% alcohol) when soap & water is not available and your hands are not visibly dirty.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

### **For further information regarding swine flu, contact:**

- Steuben County Public Health at: 607-664-2438 or toll free at 800-724-0471.
- New York State Department of Health website at:  
[www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/](http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/influenza/h1n1/)
- New York State Department of Health Hotline at: 1-800 808-1987
- Centers for Disease Control website at: [www.cdc.gov/swineflu/](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/)
- CDC Swine Flu Hotline at: 800-232-4636