

## **Key facts on H1N1 flu virus**

The H1N1 flu virus is a new strain of pandemic influenza which is different than the seasonal flu. People have no natural immunity to protect against this virus. The H1N1 flu virus emerged in April 2009 and surveillance of its spread shows that it is affecting more young and healthy people than the regular seasonal flu, which normally affects seniors and young children. People with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women may be at a greater risk for severe illness.

### **What is it?**

The H1N1 flu virus – also known as human swine influenza – is a respiratory illness that affects the nose, throat and lungs. This virus usually affects pigs, but has been transferred to humans. The H1N1 flu virus has caused primarily mild illness in Canada, but Canadians need to be prepared to respond to a potentially more severe form of the virus that may emerge this fall.

### **How is it spread?**

The H1N1 flu virus is contagious and is spread the same way as regular seasonal influenza. This happens when an infected person coughs or sneezes and their germs enter the nose, eyes, or throat of another person. The germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, and can be picked up on hands and transmitted to the respiratory system when someone touches their mouth and/or nose. It is not possible to catch it by eating pork or pork products or through blood transfusions.

### **Contagiousness**

More research is being done on how long a person can be infectious (be able to spread the virus to others), but it is believed that this period is for one day before the onset of symptoms and continues for approximately seven days after symptoms have started. The time it takes between being infected and experiencing symptoms is between two and seven days.

### **Symptoms**

Almost always:	Cough and fever
Common:	Fatigue / Muscle aches / Sore throat / Headache / Decreased appetite / Runny nose
Sometimes:	Nausea / Vomiting / Diarrhea

### **Prevention**

- ❖ Wash hands often
- ❖ Keep common surfaces disinfected
- ❖ Cough and sneeze into your arm, instead of your hand
- ❖ If you are sick, stay home until your symptoms are gone and you feel well enough to participate in all activities
- ❖ If you get flu-like symptoms and are pregnant, have underlying health problems or if your symptoms get worse, contact your health care provider.