



What is H₁N₁ and how does it spread?

Novel H₁N₁ is a new strain of influenza commonly known as “swine flu”. It is a virus, or a microscopic infectious agent. Transmission of the virus is human-to-human, and eating cooked pork products will not transmit it. It is thought to have originated in Mexico.

H₁N₁ is now considered a pandemic, which means it has reached all known populations on the planet. **Although actual confirmation is rare, there is the highest probability that the virus has reached Prairie Central schools.**

The illness resulting from the strain is generally mild, except in higher risk groups of people, such as those with asthma, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, or who are pregnant, or have a weakened immune system.

Novel H₁N₁ is spread by coughing, sneezing, or touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the nose or mouth.

Vaccine

The Livingston County Health Department has scheduled H₁N₁ vaccine clinics for priority groups of people on **Wednesday, November 18, 7:30 AM-4 PM; and Wednesday, November 25, 10 AM-2 PM.** These **free** clinics will be held at the Department complex, 310 East Torrence Avenue, Pontiac.

LCHD will also conduct clinics at **Prairie Central High School on Tuesday, December 1, 3-5 PM in the Small Gym; and at Prairie Central Junior High on Wednesday, December 2, 3-5 PM in the café.** Priority groups are as follows: Pregnant women; children and young adults ages 6 months to 24 years; adults ages 25 to 64 with chronic health conditions or lowered immunity; household members with, and caregivers of, children less than 6 months of age; health care workers; and EMS providers with direct patient contact.

Children 6 months to 9 years will need two doses, 21+ days apart, while all others will need only one.

Eventually, all people 6 months and up will be able to get the H₁N₁ vaccine.



What are typical symptoms & treatments?

Symptoms of H₁N₁ resemble those of seasonal flu and tend to include

- Fever (100° or higher),
- Cough,
- Sore throat,
- Body aches,
- Headache,
- Chills,
- Fatigue, and
- Diarrhea and vomiting.

As stated earlier, H₁N₁ is a relatively mild flu when it strikes an otherwise healthy person.

There is really no treatment that will kill the H₁N₁ virus. It must run its course. There are, however, methods recommended to ease the symptoms and even shorten the illness:

- Adequate liquid intake,
- Rest,
- Soup to ease congestion,

- Pain relievers (over-the-counter), and
- Anti-viral drugs (prescribed) Tamiflu and Relenza.

Most affected people should expect to recover without medical attention, but those developing severe symptoms or with underlying medical conditions should consult a physician.



What role should parents play?

If he/she is H₁N₁ symptom-free, there is no reason a youngster should not attend school. However, if all or a majority of the aforementioned symptoms are present, he/she should be kept home until 24-48 hours after symptoms disappear (or that length of time following the cessation of medica-

tion). A youngster should be encouraged to

- Cover his/her mouth when coughing or sneezing,
- Wash his/her hands with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing,
- Avoid touching his/her eyes, nose,

or mouth since germs spread that way, and

- Avoid contact with sick people.

A parent may want to consider the recently-released H₁N₁ vaccine for a youngster. See the “Vaccine” article on this page.



What role is the school playing?

Prairie Central is doing what it can to stem the spread of germs, although it acknowledges that, with youngsters from diverse environments in close proximity to one another during a 7+-hour school day, the containment of a virus may be difficult at

best. However, the district is

- ◆ Causing more frequent student hand-washing with soap and water;
- ◆ Exposing students to an alcohol-free hand sanitizer when hand-washing is inconvenient;
- ◆ Redoubling its efforts to clean restrooms, cafés, drinking foun-

tains, and locker rooms—where germs are often passed;

- ◆ Washing down student and teacher desks and counter surfaces—where germs are also passed—with soap and water; and
- ◆ Sending symptomatic youngsters home.

Did you know . . . that there have been several pandemic influenzas in the last 120 years: Asiatic (Russian) Flu, H₂N₂, 1889-90; Spanish Flu, H₁N₁, 1918-20; Asian Flu, H₂N₂, 1957-58; Hong Kong Flu, H₃N₂, 1968-69; and Swine Flu, H₁N₁, 2009-Present?