

# SWINE FLU PREVENTION

5/17/2010

In an effort to protect the public from the 2009, the H1N1 swine flu, health officials have issued advice that can help prevent and contain the spread of the disease. Since the virus is spread mainly from person-to-person, there is a lot you can do.

Dr. Oz and his team of experts suggest these tips to help to protect you from the H1N1 virus.

## Get Vaccinated

The National Institutes of Health and manufacturers under contract with Health and Human Services are working to get an H1N1 vaccine ready for widespread use in time to protect against the mid-winter peak. In clinical trials, most adults who got a single dose were protected within 8 to 10 days. Make sure you get a good night's sleep the day before you get your shot. Sleep can boost the effectiveness of immunizations.

## Wash your hands

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) say that hand washing is the number one way you can prevent the spread of disease. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water. Aim for a minimum of 20 seconds. Whistle while you wash: you should be cleaning your hands for the approximate length of time it takes to complete a verse of "Happy Birthday." An alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if a sink isn't nearby.

## Sneeze or cough in the crook of your elbow

There are thousands of saliva droplets that contain millions of viruses in a typical cough or sneeze. When you cover your mouth with your hands, the virus lands in your palm, and is easily transferred to everything you touch. You can also cough or sneeze into a tissue, but throw it away immediately. Then wash your hands.

## Keep your hands off your face

Germs enter the bloodstream through various mucous membranes. Try not to rub your eyes, put your fingers near your mouth or pick your nose. If your nose is dry, try coating it with an emollient protective barrier such as petroleum jelly or beeswax. Regular use of a [Neti pot](http://doctoroz.com/videos/your-questions-answered?page=5#copy) can keep sinuses and passages clear.

## Take Vitamin D

Vitamin D is produced in the body during exposure to sunlight. During the winter we tend to get less exposure so vitamin D supplements are recommended. People who take vitamin D supplements have better luck avoiding the seasonal flu; there is no reason to think that it won't do the same for H1N1 virus. Flu outbreaks tend to occur in places where solar radiation is low.

### Stay hydrated

During the winter months we have a tendency to lose fluids when our heated homes and dry air rob us of moisture. You'll know if you are hydrated if your urine is a clear pale yellow. Dark yellow is a sign that your urine is concentrated and you need to drink more.

### Get out in open space

Cold weather usually brings us indoors, sometimes in close proximity to a crowd of people who may be unknowingly infected. Spend some time outdoors and get some fresh air.

### Keep fit

Aerobic activity improves the exchange of oxygen to keep the immune system strong and lungs clear. Just remember to wipe down equipment at the gym before and after using.

### Eat your greens ... and blues and oranges ...

Dark and colorful fruits and vegetables are loaded with immune boosting phytochemicals. Plant a rainbow on your plate and dig in!

### Eat probiotics

Probiotics are the good live bacteria found in fermented food products such as yogurt and soy products like miso and tempeh. Eating these foods not only promotes the natural balance of healthy bacteria important for digestive health, it can stimulate the production of immune fighting chemicals from cells found in the gut.

### Don't smoke

Lining the inside of the nasal passages are tiny hairs whose function it is to whisk away microscopic material and prevent them from entering the bloodstream. If you smoke these hairs become damaged. Smoking also compromises breathing and produces more virus-trapping mucous. For more information on smoking, click [here](#).

### Limit alcohol consumption

Excessive drinking of alcohol depresses the immune system and compromises liver function. The heaviest of drinkers are more prone to infections and dehydration.

### Stay home if you are sick

You probably won't know if you have the H1N1 flu or seasonal flu by looking at symptoms alone. Widespread testing is just not feasible. In fact, you may not experience any symptoms for a few days. The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also experience diarrhea and vomiting. You should stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever normal without the aid of fever reducers.

### Avoid close contact with infected people

If you are a healthcare worker or caring for a loved one with the flu, it is a good idea to stay at least 6 feet away if possible. Currently, facemasks or N95 respirators are only recommended for healthcare workers and at-home caretakers who fall into a high-risk category.

### Stay informed

It seems as if public health officials have an update everyday. Sign up for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention e-mail alerts and follow the @CDCFlu on Twitter to receive the most current information about the H1N1 virus.

<http://www.doctoroz.com/videos/swine-flu-prevention>