



## Steps to prevent Influenza A (H1N1)

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As of May 3, 2009, there have been 226 laboratory confirmed cases of Influenza A (H1N1) in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of these, a Missouri woman from Platte County had contracted the disease as of May 1st. The spread of this disease — like other forms of the flu — can be prevented or reduced by good hygiene.

Currently, there is no vaccine for Influenza A. The seasonal influenza vaccine is a mix to prevent the strains most likely to go around during an upcoming flu season. Since Influenza A is a new strain, the seasonal vaccine does not prevent it.

Infection spreads person to person by someone who's infected coughing or sneezing on someone else. Wash your hands thoroughly and often to prevent the spread of this and other common diseases. Use warm water, lathering and scrubbing with soap for a full 20 seconds, rinsing and drying hands with a clean towel or paper towel. To prevent recontamination of hands from the faucet, use a paper towel to turn off water. Keep in mind that 20 seconds may be longer than most of us think. Time it once: Use a helpful time-keeper like singing the ABC's or another short song to see just how long 20 seconds really is. Use that time-keeper to help you remember to wash hands long enough each time. If you don't have access to water and soap, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer as an effective alternative.

There are other steps one can take to reduce the likelihood of catching the latest flu. The Extension Disaster Education Network Web site has these suggestions:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food for general good health.

For more information about preventing Influenza A, log on to the Missouri Department of Health and Human Services Web site at [dhss.mo.gov/BT\\_Response/\\_SwineFlu09.html#StayHealthy](http://dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/_SwineFlu09.html#StayHealthy). There is information in English, Spanish and Bosnian, and you can link to federal government information from this site.

### References

Extension Disaster Education Network. Influenza. [http://www.eden.lsu.edu/Issues\\_View.aspx?IssueID=d1b8635b-6b6a-4326-8bbf-ff6fcec0ea5c](http://www.eden.lsu.edu/Issues_View.aspx?IssueID=d1b8635b-6b6a-4326-8bbf-ff6fcec0ea5c)

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