H1N1 flu is also called the swine flu. It is not spread from pigs to humans, and we cannot get it from eating pork. H1N1 flu appeared in humans in the spring of 2009 and quickly spread around the world. A disease that is found all over the world is called a pandemic disease.

This handout describes symptoms of H1N1 flu, how it is spread, how to control it, and what to do if you or someone you are caring for gets it.

What is H1N1?
Influenza A H1N1 is caused by a virus. A virus is a type of germ that can cause illness. Influenza, or “flu” for short, is an illness of the nose, throat, and lungs.

Most of us have not built up immunity to the H1N1 flu. Immunity is the body’s ability to fight off an illness that comes from having the illness in the past. For instance, if you have had the measles once, you cannot get it again because you are immune to it.

What are symptoms of H1N1 flu?
Symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to seasonal flu. They are fever, sore throat, cough, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue (feeling very tired and weak). Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu can make a chronic illness, such as diabetes or asthma, worse. Deaths from pneumonia and respiratory failure have also occurred in people who get H1N1 flu.

Most people who get H1N1 flu have only mild symptoms and recover within 1 week.

How is it spread?
H1N1 flu is contagious. It is spread:

- Through the air when people who have it cough or sneeze.
- By touching surfaces someone who has it has coughed or sneezed on and then touching your hand to a part of your body where germs can enter, such as your mouth.

Is there a vaccine for H1N1 flu?
An H1N1 vaccine is available. People at highest risk will receive the vaccine first. After getting the vaccine, it will take about 21 days to be protected from H1N1 flu.

The H1N1 vaccine does not protect against seasonal flu. If you normally get an annual flu shot, you should still get one.
Who is at risk of getting H1N1 flu?

Anyone can get this flu, but some people are at higher risk of getting it. They may also have serious problems from the illness. It is highly recommended that these people receive the H1N1 vaccine:

- Pregnant women.
- Children and young adults 6 months to 24 years old.
- Anyone 25 to 64 years old who has another health condition that may make them very ill if they get the flu. This includes people with asthma, diabetes, heart disease, and anyone with a weak immune system.
- Health care workers.
- Anyone who has contact with children under 6 months of age. This includes family members, caregivers, and others in the home.

What should I do if I get H1N1 flu?

- Stay home from work, social activities, school, and public areas. Do not return to your normal activities until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without taking fever-lowering medicine.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Or, cough or sneeze into the inside of your elbow. Throw away used tissues.
- Wash your hands with soap and water often and always after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not close by, use an alcohol-based gel.
- Wear a mask if you must:
  - Leave your home when you are sick, so that you do not spread the disease to others.
  - Be near family members at home.

When should I call the doctor if I think I or someone I am taking care of might have H1N1 flu?

If symptoms are mild and you would not normally call the doctor about them, you do not need to call now. But, you should call if you or someone you are caring for has any of these symptoms:

- Chest pain or trouble breathing.
- Illness that is getting worse quickly.
- Severe sore throat that makes swallowing impossible.
- Very severe cough.
- Fever that lasts longer than 3 days.
- You or the person you are caring for does not respond when spoken to or does not make eye contact.