



H1N1 FLU FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is the H1N1 (swine) flu?

A. The 2009 swine flu outbreak is the spread of a new **strain of H1N1 influenza A virus** that was first detected by public health agencies in **March 2009**. Localized outbreaks of influenza-like illness were detected in three areas initially in Mexico and soon after in the United States and Canada.

Q. How many swine flu virus subtypes are there?

A. Like all influenza viruses, swine flu viruses change constantly. Pigs can be infected by avian influenza and human influenza viruses as well as swine influenza viruses. When influenza viruses from different species infect pigs, the viruses can re-assort (i.e. swap genes), and new viruses that are a mix of swine, human and/or avian influenza viruses, can emerge. Over the years, different variations of swine flu viruses have emerged. At this time, there are four main influenza type A virus subtypes that have been isolated in pigs: H1N1, H1N2, H3N2, and H3N1. However, most of the recently isolated influenza viruses from pigs have been H1N1 viruses.

Q. Who is the EPA? What are they responsible for?

A. The EPA is the **Environmental Protection Agency** (Office of Pesticide Programs). The EPA is responsible for overseeing registration and marketing of pesticides controlled under FIFRA (Federal Insecticide Fungicide Rodenticide Act) including but not limited to disinfectants and sanitizers.

Examples of products that are EPA registered:

- OxyFECT™ H Peroxide Disinfectant Cleaner
- pH7Q
- Fight Bac™ RTU

Q. Who is the FDA? What are they responsible for?

A. The FDA is the **Food and Drug Administration** a Division of the Department of Health and Human Services. The FDA is responsible for overseeing drugs including over the counter drugs such as hand sanitizer and antimicrobial skin care products that are intended to be placed on the market to be sold within interstate commerce in the US.

Examples of products that FDA oversees:

- Clario™ Green Earth® Foaming Skin Cleanser
- Clario™ Antibacterial Lotion Skin Cleanser
- Clario™ Foaming Alcohol Instant Hand Sanitizer
- Clario™ Alcohol Free Foaming Hand Sanitizer

Q. Who is the CDC? What are they responsible for?

A. The CDC is the **C**enters for **D**isease **C**ontrol and **P**revention a Division of the Department of Health and Human Services. The CDC serves as the national focus for developing and applying disease prevention and control, environmental health, and health promotion and health education activities designed to improve the health of the people of the United States.

The CDC issues guidance to individuals, employers, schools, etc on important health issues. Many different facilities have adopted the practices and guidance that CDC has issued.

Examples of guidance that CDC issues:

- Guidance for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza during the 2009-2010 School Year
- Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Guidance for Healthcare Workers and Healthcare Employers
- Interim Guidance for Correctional and Detention Facilities on Novel Influenza A (H1N1) Virus

Q. What does the EPA say about the H1N1 Virus?

A. The EPA believes, based on available scientific information, that disinfectant products currently registered as efficacious against Influenza A will be effective against the 2009 H1N1 flu strain and other influenza A virus strains on hard, non-porous surfaces.

Q. What does the FDA say about the H1N1 Virus?

A. The FDA currently does not allow for skin care manufacturers to claim efficacy against any viruses in advertising or labeling, including Influenza A and H1N1 virus. Skin Cleansers and Instant Hand Sanitizers should not have specific claimed efficacy against Influenza A and the H1N1 virus.

The FDA has already issued communications to manufacturers that are falsely advertising that their products are efficacious against the H1N1 virus.

Q. What does the CDC say about the H1N1 Virus?

A. The CDC states that frequent hand washing is the most effective method of preventing the spread of illnesses, such as Influenza A and the H1N1 Virus. If soap and water are not available, then an Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be effective at killing flu germs. If soap and water are not available, and alcohol-based products are not allowed in schools, then a non-alcohol sanitizer can be used to kill flu germs. Also, since the virus can survive on surfaces for up to 8 hours, the CDC recommends routine disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.

Q. What precautions can be taken against the H1N1 (swine) flu? (The CDC has issued new guidelines for the 2009/2010 school year.)

A. The CDC has issued the following recommendations if the severity of the flu is similar to Spring 2009.

1. Stay home when sick:

Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. Stay home when you are sick.

2. Separate ill students and staff:

Students and staff who appear to have flu-like illness should be sent to a room separate from others until they can be sent home. CDC recommends that they wear a surgical mask, if possible, and that those who care for ill students and staff wear protective gear such as a mask.

3. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:

The new recommendations emphasize the importance of the basic foundations of influenza prevention: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible, and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available).

4. Routine cleaning:

School staff should routinely clean areas that students and staff touch often with the cleaners they typically use. Special cleaning with bleach and other non-detergent based cleaners is not necessary.

5. **Early treatment of high-risk students and staff:** People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible.

6. Consideration of selective school dismissal:

Although there are not many schools where all or most students are at high risk (for example, schools for medically fragile children or for pregnant students) a community might decide to dismiss such a school to better protect these high-risk students.

As with most contagious diseases, the number one way to stop in the transmission is to WASH YOUR HANDS.

Q. What does the CDC say about Instant Hand Sanitizers versus hand washing with soap and water?

A. The CDC recommends frequent hand washing with soap and water to prevent spreading flu germs. This is the most effective way to stop germs. The action of rubbing hands with soap and then rinsing with water ensures that the germs are washed off and away from the hands.

The CDC recommends using instant hand sanitizers only when soap and water are not available. A hand sanitizer will kill the germs within a set amount of time, but it does not remove the germs from the hands. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be used.

Q. What does the CDC say about Alcohol Free Hand Sanitizers?

A. The CDC has issued guidance to educational facilities that an Alcohol Free Hand Sanitizer can be used in place of alcohol-based sanitizers if alcohol is not allowed in a facility. Below is an excerpt from the CDC website www.cdc.gov

CDC recommends that students and staff be encouraged to wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective at killing flu germs, but may not be allowed in all schools. If soap and water are not available, and alcohol-based products are not allowed in the school, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful however, there is less evidence on their effectiveness compared to that on hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizers.