



H1N1 (Swine) Flu Fact Sheet

(Note: This sheet is for informational purposes only and should not be considered all-inclusive. It is merely intended to provide some guidance to those in the cleaning & restoration industry who may be involved in microbiological remediation efforts.)

What is the H1N1 (swine) flu?*

A respiratory disease from Type A (H1N1) influenza viruses that have caused regular outbreaks in pigs. In most animal cases transmission was limited and human infection was rare. However, the current strain of swine flu has mutated and contains a combination of swine, bird and human strains of the influenza virus. As such, the current virus is now contagious in humans, and transmission between people is similar to other strains of influenza – spread through coughing, sneezing or touching surfaces with the virus on it.

What are the symptoms?*

The symptoms are similar to other types of human viruses with fever, chills, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some have reported diarrhea, vomiting and difficulty breathing as well. H1N1 can also aggravate other underlying, chronic medical conditions in individuals, so those with weakened immune systems should avoid being exposed to the virus. Severe illnesses (pneumonia and respiratory failure) and death have also been reported. Individuals with the H1N1 flu should be considered potentially contagious as early as 24 hours before exhibiting symptoms, during the time they are symptomatic, and up to 7 days following the onset of the illness.

What precautions can be taken to reduce the spread or risk of infection?*

Those who are ill should limit their exposure to others, cover their mouths with a tissue when sneezing or coughing (or cough into the crook of the arm to reduce the spread of germs), and consider wearing a face mask when in public. The CDC recommends avoiding close contact (maintaining a distance of 6 feet) with affected individuals. Frequent hand washing for both those who are sick or healthy will help to reduce transmission of germs. Hands should be washed in warm, soapy water for 15-20 seconds. Alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel hand sanitizers are also appropriate.

How should cleaning and restoration professionals handle these outbreaks from a remediation standpoint?

Contractors assisting organizations with mitigation efforts should ensure the safety of their own employees as their first priority through proper training and the mandatory use of proper personal protective equipment. (See below.) Protocols for cleaning following an outbreak of swine flu should be similar to those used for norovirus outbreaks and regular flu epidemics.

Since the virus mutates as it is transferred and was just recently identified by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), it is difficult for chemical manufacturers to test their current products against this strain of the virus. However, contractors should use reputable products that have been tested against and proven effective for other viral contaminants, including other strains of Influenza A. Based on available scientific data, the EPA believes that currently registered influenza A virus products will be effective against the 2009-H1N1 virus. Disinfectants are most effective on clean surfaces, so cleaning and disinfection measures are appropriate. Products should be used in accordance with the instructions on the label.

The Dept. of Health & Human Services pandemic website indicates the Influenza A virus can survive on non-porous surfaces like counters and desks (e.g., stainless steel, hard plastic) for 24-48 hours and in ambient temperatures on porous materials such as cloth or paper for 8-12 hours. When surfaces are wet, influenza virus can survive for up to 72 hours.

Common area surfaces/items that should be cleaned include:

- Door knobs
- Light switches
- Countertops
- Tabletops

- Desktop surfaces
- Refrigerator door handles
- Microwaves (in common kitchens)
- Telephones
- Computer keyboards & mice
- Buttons/panels on office equipment (copiers, postage machines, shredders)
- Faucet handles
- Soft goods can be laundered as normal
- Sheets or towels from a sick person should be carefully rolled up before laundering to reduce the spread of influenza particles to other surfaces and contents.
- Dishes, silverware, etc. can be washed by hand or in dishwasher with regular detergent

Recommended Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for Cleaning & Restoration Professionals

- Disposable Tyvek® suits
- Shoe covers
- Surgical style or rubber non-permeable gloves
- Splash resistant goggles
- N-95 or higher filtering facepiece respirator certified by NIOSH

*Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, www.cdc.gov.

Special thanks to the RIA members and industry consultants who shared their experience and expertise in compiling and reviewing this information.

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