

Preventing H1N1

Taken from www.livewellamerica.org

[Dr. Vinay Goyal](#) is an MBBS,DRM,DNB (Intensivist and Thyroid specialist) having clinical experience of over 20 years. He has worked in institutions like Hinduja Hospital, Bombay Hospital, Saifee Hospital, Tata Memorial etc. Presently, he is heading our Nuclear Medicine Department and Thyroid clinic at Riddhivinayak Cardiac and Critical Centre, Malad (W).

During an August 2009 visit to [Molokai, HI](#) he lectured on the origin of and precautions for [H1N1 \(SWINE FLU\)](#). The following is a summarization of his lecture:

- H1N1, like other Influenza A viruses, only infects the upper respiratory tract and proliferates only there. The only portals of entry are the nostrils and mouth/ throat. In a global epidemic of this nature, it's almost impossible not coming into contact with H1N1 in spite of all precautions.
- Contact with H1N1 is not so much of a problem as proliferation is.
- What most [N95 respirators](#) (face masks) are designed to filter is about 95% particulates of 0.3, while the size of H1N1 virus is about 0.1. Hence, dependence on N95 to protect against H1N1 is like protecting against rain with an umbrella made of mosquito net.
- [Tamiflu](#) drug does not kill the virus, but it prevents H1N1 from further proliferation till the virus limits itself in about 1-2 weeks during the virus' natural cycle.

While you are still healthy and not showing any symptoms of H1N1 infection, in order to prevent proliferation, aggravation of symptoms and development of secondary infections, some very simple steps not fully highlighted in most official communications – can be practiced:

- Frequent hand-washing.
- “Hands-off-the-face” approach except to eat, bathe, etc.
- Gargle twice a day with warm salt water (use Listerine if you don't trust salt). H1N1 takes 2-3 days after initial infection in the throat/ nasal cavity to proliferate and show characteristic symptoms. Simple gargling prevents proliferation. In a way, gargling with salt water has the same effect on a healthy individual that Tamiflu has on an infected person. Don't underestimate this simple, inexpensive and powerful preventative method.
- Clean your nostrils at least once every day with warm salt water, swabbing both nostrils with cotton buds dipped in warm salt water is very effective in bringing down viral population.
- Boost your natural immunity with foods that are rich in Vitamin C, or Vitamin C tablets that contain Zinc to boost absorption.
- Drink as much of warm liquids as you can. Drinking warm liquids has the same effect as gargling, but in the reverse direction. They wash off proliferating viruses from the throat into the stomach where they cannot survive.

Know the Difference between a cold and H1N1 Flu

Courtesy of American Red Cross

Symptom	Cold	Flu
Fever	Fever is rare with a cold	Fever is usually present with the flu in up to 80% of cases. A temp of 100° F. or higher for 3-4 days is associated with the flu.
Coughing	A hacking productive (mucus producing) cough is often present with a cold.	A non-productive (non mucus cough) is usually present with the flu (referred to as dry cough)
Aches	Slight aches and pains can be part of a cold	Several aches and pains are common with the flu
Stuffy Nose	Stuffy nose is common with the cold and typically resolves spontaneously within a week	Stuffy nose is not commonly present with the flu
Chills	Chills are uncommon with the cold	60% of people who have the flu experience chills
Tiredness	Tiredness is fairly mild with a cold	Tiredness is mild to moderate with the flu
Sneezing	Sneezing is commonly present with the cold	Sneezing is not common with the flu
Sudden Symptoms	Cold symptoms tend to develop over a few days	The flu has a rapid onset within 3-6 hours. It hits hard and includes sudden symptoms such as high fever, aches and pains
Headache	A headache is fairly uncommon with a cold	A headache is very common with the flu. Present in 80% of flu cases
Sore Throat	Sore throat is common with a cold	Sore throat is not common with the flu
Chest discomfort	Chest discomfort is mild to moderate with a cold	Chest discomfort is often severe with the flu