



# Congregations & the Flu

Seasonal Flu & H1N1 October 2009

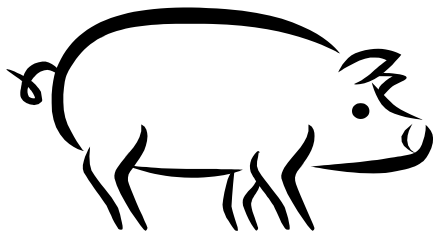


## Seasonal Flu Definition by MayoClinic.com

Influenza is a viral infection that attacks the respiratory system, including your nose, throat, bronchial tubes and lungs. Influenza, commonly called the flu, is not the same as the stomach viruses that cause diarrhea and vomiting.

Anyone can get the flu, but young children, older adults, people with weakened immune systems and those with chronic illnesses are especially vulnerable. If you're at high risk of flu, your first line of defense is an annual flu shot.

Approximately 50 million people died worldwide in the 1918 influenza pandemic. Today, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as many as 36,000 people in the United States die each year of complications of influenza and more than 200,000 are hospitalized.



## Flu Symptoms

- Fever (over 101°F / 38° C in adults & in children often as high as 103°F to 105°F / 39.5° C to 40.5° C) — some people who have influenza do not have fever
- Chills and Sweats
- Headache
- Dry Cough
- Muscular aches and pains (especially in back, arms, and legs)
- Fatigue & Weakness
- Nasal Congestion
- Loss of Appetite
- Diarrhea & Vomiting in Children (Seasonal Flu)
- Diarrhea & Vomiting in Adults or Children (Swine Flu)

Initially, the flu may seem like a common cold with a runny nose, sneezing and sore throat. But colds usually develop slowly, whereas the flu tends to come on suddenly. And although a cold can be a nuisance, you usually feel much worse with the flu. You do not need to have all the symptoms to have the flu.

Swine flu symptoms develop three to five days after you're exposed to the virus and continue for about eight days, starting one day before you get sick and continuing until you've recovered.

**If you develop symptoms, see your doctor right away. Talk to your doctor about the vaccine for seasonal flu & the vaccine for H1N1. You may need both.**

## Swine Flu Definition from MayoClinic.com

Swine flu is a respiratory infection caused by influenza A viruses. The outbreak of what is popularly called swine flu involves a new H1N1 type A influenza strain that's a genetic combination of swine, avian and human influenza viruses. It can spread from human to human.

True swine flu ordinarily causes illness in pigs. Pig-to-human transmission is unusual, and

human-to-human transmission of true swine flu is also possible but infrequent.

Based on its wide spread, the World Health Organization has declared the 2009 outbreak of the new H1N1 flu a global pandemic.

The new swine flu strain is being called by various names: swine-origin influenza A,

swine influenza A (H1N1), influenza A/California/H1N1, swine origin influenza virus, North American flu and influenza A (H1N1).

The best approach you can take is to avoid infection. If you develop symptoms of swine flu, seek prompt medical attention to give yourself the best chance of antiviral drugs being effective.

## Congregations & the Flu

Check out these websites:

[www.episcopalchurch.org/79901\\_115209\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_115209_ENG_HTML.htm)

[www.er-d.org/PlanningforPandemicInfluenza](http://www.er-d.org/PlanningforPandemicInfluenza)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

[www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homeless.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homeless.htm)

**Encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette of both people who are well and those who have any symptoms of flu!**

Wash hands frequently with soap and water when possible; keep hands away from your nose, mouth, and eyes; and cover noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available). For children with emerging self-care skills, parents and caregivers should closely monitor their respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene and remind children not to share cups or eating utensils.

## Encourage those with Symptoms to Stay Home

It is important to encourage people with flu symptoms to stay home. Staying home helps people with the flu to rest and heal. It also helps stop the spread of the influenza virus.

For the congregation, this takes planning:

- Plan to have bulletins and other worship materials which you can send to people.

- Plan to send people materials from their Christian Formation class.
- Have hand sanitizers for Eucharistic Visitors. Teach them to use the hand sanitizers in their car after leaving a sick person's home. Teach them to avoid touching their eyes, noses, or mouths.
- Consider purchasing medical masks for Eucharistic Visitors
- Never allow a person with flu-like symptoms to serve as a Eucharistic Visitor until symptom free and well.
- See resources such as [www.cdc.gov/cleanhands](http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands) and <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

## Think Carefully about Liturgy & the Flu

Sometimes people are infectious before they realize it. Sometimes people come to church even though they should stay home. Therefore, consider the following guidelines:

- Only those with no flu-like symptoms should be distributing Holy Commun-

ion. This includes clergy, who, if symptomatic, should allow a lay person (or other clergyperson) to distribute the bread and the wine.

- Consider using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately before setting the table or presiding.
- Have disinfectant wipes available for people to use on the BCP and Hymnal, or any other surface.
- Teach persons who have cold or flu-like symptoms to receive only the bread until they are symptom free and well (**say NO! to intinction**).

## Plan for Extra Facilities Care & Expenses

The influenza virus enters your body when you inhale contaminated droplets or transfer live virus from a contaminated surface to your eyes, nose or mouth on your hand. Because of this, you may wish to consider the following:

- Have boxes of tissues in the pews & plastic

bags which individuals may use to contain their waste tissues.

- Have disinfectant wipes available for people to use on the BCP and Hymnal, or any other surface.
- Have building staff clean the restrooms

and other surfaces after every liturgy. The flu virus can live 2–3 hrs. on surfaces.

- Use plenty of hot, soapy water to clean chalices and patens.
- Consider exchanging the peace without hugging or shaking hands.

**Remember to get plenty of rest and eat healthily. Your strength turns out to be an extremely important factor in the effectiveness of your flu shots.**

In the City of Chicago, you can call 311 to find the nearest location providing free flu vaccines to the unemployed and uninsured. In other villages and towns, contact your local unemployment office.