

H1N1 (Swine) Flu: 10 Ways to Calm Your Worries

The number of sick people is climbing, and a vaccine is not ready yet. The swine (H1N1) flu has some people on edge. But don't let the "what ifs" take over. Keep your nerves in check by following these 10 tips:

1. Stay informed. Many people are talking about H1N1 flu. But some of this information is misinformation. Make sure you get the facts about H1N1 flu from reliable sources. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is updating their H1N1 flu Web site daily. Go to www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu for the most current information.

2. But don't stay glued to your television or computer. Take a break from the news if it's making you feel more anxious or depressed. Fill your time with activities that make you happy and take your mind off your worries.

3. Keep things in perspective. According to the CDC, most cases of H1N1 flu have been relatively mild in the U.S. And the virus is responding to treatment. Call your doctor if you have flu-like symptoms. If you are diagnosed with H1N1 flu, chances are you'll fully recover.

4. Have healthy habits. Good health protects you from certain illnesses. Live a healthy lifestyle by:

- Getting enough sleep.
- Exercising regularly. Check with your doctor before you increase your activity level.
- Eating nutritious foods.
- Drinking plenty of water.
- Manage your stress.

5. Be prepared. Being ready for a crisis may reduce some of your anxiety:

- Stock up on food, water and other supplies. Store enough non-perishable food, water and other household items that will last two weeks if possible.
- Keep supplies on hand that you may need in case of illness. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medication and medical supplies.
- Consider what would happen if you could not go into the office or if your child's school temporarily closed. Ask your employer if working from home would be an option. Check to see if your child could bring home school work.

6. Talk to your children. There's a good chance they're nervous, too. You can help ease their worried minds. Answer all of their questions about the outbreak honestly. If their school closes, keep other parts of their routine as normal as possible. They learn how to handle stress by watching you. Cope well and they will follow your lead.

7. Stay connected. Keep up your normal social routine. Doing so may be a welcome distraction. Share your concerns with your friends and family. They may be able to offer you advice and support. If you cannot leave your house, keep your social networks intact through phone and e-mail.

8. Have faith in the experts. U.S. and world public health officials have been preparing for a possible flu pandemic for years. They have the ability and resources to deal with a worldwide outbreak. They're working hard to stop the spread of the H1N1 flu and reduce the severity of the virus.

9. Be resilient. Resilience is your ability to cope with hard times and stress. Remember how you got through a difficult situation in the past, and use those skills to help you now.

10. Get help. If you feel extremely anxious or if your fears are interfering with your life, seek help. Your primary doctor may be able to refer you to a mental health professional.