

# FACTS ABOUT 2009 H1N1 INFLUENZA

## WHAT IS INFLUENZA A?

- ▲ A group of viruses that cause contagious respiratory disease
- ▲ Many different strains of influenza exist
- ▲ Strains typically infect different animals
  - Highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 continues to circulate among birds in certain regions
  - H1N1 is one of the most common Influenza A strains that infects pigs

## WHAT IS 2009 H1N1 INFLUENZA?

- ▲ An influenza A strain that has developed the ability of transmission among humans
- ▲ It is causing an outbreak of a novel contagious flu
- ▲ May have originated from a combination of swine flu viruses formed via a mutation
- ▲ Contact with pigs is not associated with ongoing transmission in the 2009 outbreak
- ▲ Primary mode of transmission in this outbreak is still under investigation

## HOW DO VIRUSES MUTATE?

- ▲ Viruses mutate naturally, as a survival mechanism
- ▲ Since viruses are genetically simple, the mutation process is easier
- ▲ Mutation process that may have occurred with H1N1:
  - A host (person or pig) is infected with both a common human flu strain and a virulent swine flu strain
  - Viruses combine and mutate in the lung of host
  - A new virus is created that can pass from human to human

## HAS 2009 H1N1 SPREAD TO HUMANS?

- ▲ Yes, H1N1 infections are being observed in humans in several countries around the world
- ▲ In the past, human infections primarily have involved close contact between people and sick pigs
- ▲ However, contact with pigs or pork meat is not associated with 2009 outbreak
- ▲ Once people are infected, person-to-person transmission can occur

## WHAT IS A PANDEMIC?

- ▲ An epidemic that occurs on a global scale when there is no immunity to a new virus
- ▲ Influenza pandemics are rare but recurring; occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968
- ▲ Pandemic does not define mortality, only geography

## WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF H1N1 INFECTION?

- ▲ Typical of seasonal influenza, including fever (usually high), headache, extreme fatigue, dry cough, sore throat and chills
- ▲ Some reported diarrhea and vomiting
- ▲ In rare cases, the disease can progress to pneumonia and respiratory failure, leading to death

## HOW CAN H1N1 INFLUENZA BE CONTROLLED?

- ▲ Seasonal influenza vaccine not likely to protect humans from the 2009 H1N1 flu virus
- ▲ Antiviral drugs oseltamivir (Tamiflu™) and zanamivir can lessen the symptoms of this virus
- ▲ Follow precautions for seasonal influenza to control spread of disease:
  - Vigilant personal hand hygiene and use of alcohol based hand sanitizers
  - Thorough disinfection of contaminated surfaces in areas with ill individuals
  - Cough etiquette
  - Proper hand hygiene

Source: World Health Organization