

H1N1 Questions and Answers for Students in the Krieger and Whiting Schools

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

Symptoms can include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms can include runny nose, body aches, headache, fatigue, diarrhea or vomiting.

How can I avoid getting sick?

Frequent and thorough hand-washing with soap and warm water reduces your risk of getting the flu. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer is a good alternative if soap and water are not available. Hand sanitizer is available in our dining halls and other campus facilities. Good hand-washing is especially important after coughing or sneezing.

You should avoid sharing eating and drinking utensils.

You should frequently clean your living quarters, especially commonly used surfaces, such as doorknobs, refrigerator handles, remote controls, computer keyboards, countertops, faucet handles and bathroom areas.

What should I do if I think I have symptoms of H1N1?

Call the Student Health and Wellness Center at 410-516-8270 to set up an appointment or use the center's "walk-in" system if a same-day appointment slot is not available. When you arrive at the Health Center, ask the receptionist for a mask and indicate that you think you may have the flu. You will be seen as soon as possible.

What should I do after I am seen at the Health Center?

If your family lives nearby, go home to recover. If you cannot go home, stay in your room or apartment. Follow the instructions the Health Center's healthcare providers give you on social distancing, class attendance and how to monitor your symptoms while ill. Drink plenty of clear fluids (such as water, broth and sports drinks) to keep from becoming dehydrated.

Will I be treated with anti-viral medication?

The Student Health and Wellness Center will follow guidelines issued by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention both for treatment of ill students and for prophylaxis (or preventive treatment) for students who have been exposed to the flu virus. At present, CDC guidance is that antiviral medications for treatment or prophylaxis be given only to students at increased risk for complications from infection with H1N1 flu. This includes students with chronic medical conditions requiring ongoing medical treatment, such as asthma or diabetes, or students who have an altered immune system or who take medications that suppress the immune system. Students with conditions such as pollen allergies or who had asthma as a child, but who do not currently take asthma medications, would not be treated with antiviral medications. This approach has been reviewed and confirmed with experts from the Johns Hopkins schools of Medicine and Public Health.

If I am on a meal plan and become ill with the flu, how will I get my meals?

Provisions are in place for roommates, friends, resident advisors or Residential Life staff to pick up food at the dining hall and deliver it to sick students.

When can I leave my room or apartment and return to my normal activities, including class?

You should stay in your room for at least 24 hours after – without the help of fever-reducing medications such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen – you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever such as chills or sweats. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100 degrees F or 37.8 degrees C or greater. Thermometers are available at the Student Health and Wellness Center.

After my initial visit to the Student Health and Wellness Center, when should I come back or seek emergency medical treatment?

Go for medical care right away if you are having difficulty breathing or feel your illness is becoming significantly worse.

What happens when I miss classes, homework assignments or exams?

Faculty members are being instructed to allow legitimate absences, which includes absences due to flu or other illness. Specifically, it is a legitimate absence to stay out of class until at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever without taking fever-reducing medication. In keeping with our standard policy, written excuses for missed classes are not provided. Students are expected to notify their professors immediately by telephone or e-mail should they need to miss classes due to illness and arrange to make up missed assignments. Faculty members have been urged particularly to accommodate students afflicted with the flu. The Student Health and Wellness Center will continue to provide documentation to students who have sought care at the center when they miss mid-term or final exams, need extensions on major projects or undergo extended absences.

What if I have a roommate who develops H1N1? Will he or she be put in isolation?

At the present time, we do not plan to create a “flu ward” or otherwise automatically remove ill students from their residence halls or apartments. We do encourage ill students whose families live nearby to go home to recover. For those who cannot go home, we will provide masks and instruct them to wear a mask whenever another student is present in the room. We will also provide masks, on request, to well students who are sharing a room with a sick student, although the benefits of this approach are not proven. H1N1 flu appears at the present time to be no more virulent than seasonal flu and we do not isolate seasonal flu cases. Moreover, we simply do not have any available extra campus beds that could serve this purpose effectively. If it would make you feel more comfortable, you may wish to stay with friends until your sick roommate recovers. The university will monitor the number of infections throughout the Homewood campus, and has contingency plans for isolating ill students should that become necessary.

Students with chronic medical conditions whose roommates are diagnosed with H1N1 should contact the Student Health and Wellness Center immediately to be evaluated for prophylaxis, or preventive treatment, with antiviral medications.

If I get sick, how can I avoid passing on the virus?

You should seek care at the Health and Wellness Center. We ask you and all students who feel sick to be good citizens of the university community by avoiding or minimizing social contact. You should particularly avoid large gatherings, including classes, social events or athletic events. You should wear a mask, wash your hands frequently and stay at a distance from other people. You should cough or sneeze into tissues and immediately dispose of the tissues. If no tissue is available, you should cough or sneeze into your sleeves, not your hands. You should remain in your room or apartment unless seeking medical care and should not attend class or any group events until you are fever-free, without fever-reducing medication, for 24 hours.

Will H1N1 vaccine be available?

We anticipate vaccinating all KSAS and WSE students who wish to receive the H1N1 vaccine. It is not yet clear when vaccination will begin, because the H1N1 vaccine is still in production and undergoing testing. When it becomes available, it will be made available first on a priority basis to high-risk recipients, such as pregnant women and health care workers, so it is unlikely that college students will be among the first groups vaccinated. We will be receiving our vaccine supply through the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. If supplies are still limited when we begin receiving our vaccine, we may initially need to prioritize certain high risk-groups of students based on DHMH guidelines.

Who can I call if have questions?

If the questions are health-related, Dr. Alain Joffe, director of the Student Health and Wellness Center, should be contacted at 410-516-8270 or ajoffe@jhu.edu.

All other questions should be directed to Dr. Susan Boswell, dean of student life, at 410-5160-8208 or sboswell@jhu.edu.