

# Sensible Advice About Swine Flu

*This message is from Dr. Vinay Goyal a renowned doctor who visited last week to lecture on the topic H1N1 (SWINE FLU), its origin and precautions.*

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

*The following message was given by him, I [author unknown] feel it makes a lot of sense and important for all of us to know his message.....*

Thanks to media hype about H1N1, several people who trust me have either approached or called me for advice. The hype in the media about the utility of facemasks and N95 respirators as a tool for general protection against H1N1 can't be deplored enough.

Yesterday, a friend who listened wanted me to write down briefly what I advised so that he could tell others in similar words.

Hence this short email to friends whom I have advised recently (and others whom I haven't yet). *Please realize that this is not an official advice, especially the one about facemasks or N95.*

Most N95 respirators are designed to filter 95% particulates of 0.3 $\mu$ , while the size of H1N1 virus is about 0.1 $\mu$ . Hence, dependence on N95 to protect against H1N1 is like protecting against rain with an umbrella made of mosquito netting.

Tamiflu does not kill but prevents H1N1 from further proliferation till the virus limits itself in about 1-2 weeks (its natural cycle). 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.

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 (instead of focusing on how to stock N95 or Tamiflu):

1. Frequent hand washing (well highlighted in all official communications).
2. "Hands-off-the-face" approach. Resist all temptations to touch any part of face (unless you want to eat, bathe or slap).
3. 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 one. Don't underestimate this simple, inexpensive and powerful preventative method.

4. Similar to 3 above, clean your nostrils at least once every day with warm salt water. Blowing the nose hard once a day and swabbing both nostrils with cotton buds dipped in warm salt water is very effective in bringing down viral population.

5. Boost your natural immunity with foods that are rich in Vitamin C (Amla and other citrus fruits). if you have to supplement with Vitamin C tablets, make sure that it also has Zinc to boost absorption.

6. 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, proliferate or do any harm.

All these are simple ways to prevent, within means of most households, and certainly much less painful than to wait in long queues outside public hospitals.

Happy breathing!