

# Seasonal Flu and H1N1 Flu

## General Information

September 2009



### What is the flu?

The flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Flu viruses cause illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States each year. There are many different flu viruses and sometimes a new flu virus emerges to make people sick.

### What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 flu is a new and very different influenza virus that is spreading worldwide among people. This flu season, the new virus may cause a lot more people to get sick than during a regular flu season. It also may cause more hospital stays and deaths than seasonal flu.

### How does flu spread?

- Coughs of people who are sick with the flu.
- Sneezes of people who are sick with the flu.
- Touching something with the flu virus on it and then touching your mouth or nose.

### What are the symptoms of the H1N1 flu?

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

### Who should get the seasonal vaccine?

- All children ages 6 months through 18 years.
- All people ages 50 and older.
- Women who will be pregnant during the flu season.
- Adults and children with chronic heart, lung, kidney, liver or metabolic diseases like diabetes.
- Adults and children who have a weakened immune system.
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.
- Health-care personnel.
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years of age and adults over 50, with special emphasis on children younger than 6 months.
- Household contacts and caregivers of people at high risk for complications due to influenza.

### When should we start getting vaccinated for seasonal flu?

You should get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available.

### Who should receive the H1N1 vaccine?

- Pregnant women.
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age.
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel.
- Persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old.
- People ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

## When will the H1N1 flu vaccine be available?

It's expected to be available sometime in October.

## How can I protect myself against flu?

- Get a seasonal flu and H1N1 flu vaccine for yourself and your child.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Washing your hands should take as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice. If soap and water are not available, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used (the gels should be rubbed into your hands until they are dry).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Try to avoid from having close contact (about 6 feet) with sick people, including anyone in the household who is sick.
- Keep surfaces like bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom and kitchen counters clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick persons in the trash.

## Is there medicine to treat the flu?

Currently the CDC recommends that use of antiviral medications be prioritized for people with severe illness, like hospitalized patients, or those at higher risk for flu complications, including children younger than 5 years old, adults 65 years and older, pregnant women, persons with certain chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions and persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

For those who fall into the priority categories, early treatment (within 48 hours of the onset of illness) with antiviral medications can decrease the risk of severe illness from influenza, but for most healthy patients, the benefits of using antivirals may be modest.

## What are the emergency warning signs in children who are sick?

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

## What are the emergency warning signs in adults who are sick?

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

## Where can I find more resources?

If you have questions about seasonal flu and H1N1 flu, start at [meritcare.com](http://meritcare.com). We have the most up-to-date information and can direct you to other credible sources.



Follow  
MeritCare



Be a fan  
of MeritCare



MeritCare's flu line  
(701) 234-1234



[meritcare.com](http://meritcare.com)  
(keyword: flu)

*(Main source of information: Centers for  
Disease Control and Prevention)*

