



H1N1 Information for Members

Flu – What is it? How is H1N1 different?

Flu is short for Influenza and is caused by viruses. This year we will be dealing with two strains of flu – seasonal influenza and H1N1 (Swine) flu in the United States.

Symptoms of both seasonal flu and H1N1 include fever, coughing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches and fatigue. H1N1 symptoms may be same as seasonal flu but may also include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

Outbreaks of seasonal flu usually occur yearly between late fall and spring. H1N1 flu actually became noticeable in early spring and has continued through the summer and fall months. H1N1 has reached “Pandemic status” as it is easily transmitted from person to person and has been found worldwide.

Severity of both seasonal flu and H1N1 can vary from mild to severe. CDC tracks both seasonal flu and H1N1. Currently the CDC classifies our area as experiencing widespread flu.

Flu Prevention

Both strains of flu are transmitted in respiratory secretions from coughing and sneezing and can be transmitted by direct contact with contaminated surfaces. That includes desks, phones, computers, etc. The sick person is usually infectious from 1 day prior to developing symptoms and until fever has been absent for 24 hours. Key ways to prevent flu infection include:

- Frequent hand washing – hand sanitizers also work
- Clean your work surfaces frequently
- If you are sick – stay home while febrile to prevent spread of flu to co-workers
- Get vaccinated unless not recommended by your physician

Vaccination

You will need two vaccines this year to prevent seasonal flu and H1N1. Seasonal flu vaccine is now available. CDC is recommending vaccinations start now. Please call your doctor for an appointment to obtain a seasonal flu vaccine. If your doctor is not able to provide seasonal flu vaccine, you may use any local seasonal flu clinic.

H1N1 Information for Members (cont.)

H1N1 vaccine is in the final stages of testing. It will be managed/dispensed locally by the public health departments, public health clinics and hospitals. H1N1 vaccine will be rolled out to priority high risk groups as soon as it becomes available. These groups currently include:

- Pregnant women – they are at higher risk for complications and vaccination can potentially provide coverage to infants
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age as younger children are at higher risk for flu related complications
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel – we need all available healthcare and EMS personnel to be able to care for sick populations.
- All people from 6 months thru 24 years of age.
- Persons aged 25 to 64 who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from flu. These complications would include:
 - Pulmonary disease
 - Cardiac disease
 - Immunodeficiencies
 - Multiple co-morbid conditions
- H1N1 is not new. There was also an outbreak of H1N1 in the 1950's and it is thought that those ages 50 and older may already have developed immunity to H1N1 due to this previous exposure.

If you develop Seasonal or H1N1 flu symptoms:

- Stay home and rest until you are fever free for 24 hours;
- Drink plenty of fluids (Gatorade, water, soups)
- Stay home! Have healthy family members grocery shop.
- Avoid close contact with others
- Seek medical care if you develop difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Unable to keep fluids down due to vomiting
- Develops confusion, or is less responsive than normal

Your doctor may recommend:

- Over the counter meds to manage runny nose, cough, fever
- May prescribe anti-viral medications
- May prescribe antibiotics if there is also a bacterial infection

Resources:

Flu.gov
CDC.gov