

## Flu Questions and Answers

### **What Should I Do If I Think I Have the Flu?**

If you have a fever of 100.4 or more, plus a cough or sore throat, you should stay home until you feel completely well for 24 hours. **Don't go to a hospital or your doctor's office, where you might be exposed to sicker people. Call your doctor with any questions or if you are at risk of flu complications.**

### **Who Is At Risk for Regular Flu Complications?**

You are at high risk of regular flu complications if you are: pregnant, under age five, under age 18 and are on long-term aspirin therapy, are 65 or older, have asthma, diabetes or other conditions affecting the heart, lungs, blood, liver or kidneys, have a weakened immune system, are a health care worker or live with or care for someone at risk.

### **Who is At Risk for H1N1 Flu Complications?**

Pregnant women, infants younger than six months old, people six months to 24 years old, people 25 to 64 with health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or other conditions affecting the heart, lungs, blood, liver or kidneys, people with weakened immune systems and people under 18 on long term aspirin therapy are at risk of H1N1 flu complications. Health care workers, including emergency medical workers, also are at risk.

### **What Can I Do?**

You can ask your doctor for the regular flu shot now and find out whether you should get the H1N1 flu shot when it is available.

The novel H1N1 flu vaccine will be given first to people who are believed to be most at risk of complications, people who live with or take care of infants younger than six months, who cannot get the vaccine, and health care workers, including emergency medical workers.

The priority groups designated to get the vaccine first include pregnant women, people six months to 24 years old, people 25 to 64 with health conditions such as asthma, diabetes or other conditions affecting the heart, lungs, blood, liver or kidneys, people with weakened immune systems and people under 18 on long-term aspirin therapy.

### **If I Am At High Risk, and Have Mild Flu-like Illness, What Should I Do?**

If you are at high risk and have a fever of 100.4 or more plus a cough or sore throat, you should call your doctor to discuss whether you need medicine for flu. **Don't go to a hospital or your doctor's office without calling first, because you might be exposed to sicker people.**

## **When Should I Go To A Hospital With Flu Symptoms?**

You should get to a hospital right away **only** if you have severe illness like difficulty breathing and you have a fever of 100.4 plus a cough or sore throat. If you call 911, say you may have severe influenza.

## **What Are the Symptoms of Novel H1N1 (Swine) Flu?**

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of regular flu and include fever of 100.4 or higher and cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

## **Do I Need A Flu Test?**

It is unlikely that you will need to be tested for the flu. Regular flu and novel H1N1 flu have similar symptoms and the treatment is the same **regardless of testing**. Most people will get better on their own without a need for medicine or even a doctor's visit.

## **What Should I Do To Get Better?**

Rest and drink plenty of fluids. You can also take fever-reducing medications, such as medications containing acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (examples: Motrin, Advil). However, aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) should not be given to children or teenagers who have influenza; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome. Children younger than four should not be given medication without first speaking with your child's physician.

Most people will recover without medical care or specific treatment. If you are at high risk for flu complications, call your doctor to discuss treatment. If you have severe illness, seek immediate medical care

## **How Can I Avoid the Flu or Keep From Spreading the Flu to my Friends, Co-Workers and Family?**

- To help fight the flu, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue away.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough into your sleeve, not into your hand.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- If you're sick, stay home and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Wait until 24 hours after your temperature returns to normal to consider going back to school or work.

## **How Can I Be Prepared In Case I Get the Flu?**

This checklist offers some things you can keep at home to be prepared in case you are sick and want to avoid having to go shopping. You should have an ample supply of tissues, soap, ibuprofen or acetaminophen and other over-the-counter cough and flu remedies, nonperishable food and formula and diapers if you have an infant.

Go to <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/individual/checklist.html>

## **How Long Should I Stay Home with the Flu?**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most people with the 2009 H1N1 flu virus who were not hospitalized had a fever that lasted two to four days, which kept them home three to five days. If you are sick, you may be ill for a week or longer.

You should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel and not going to work or school, for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. Remember that in most cases, fever and illness goes away without medicine. If you leave the house to seek medical care, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. You can also wear a face mask if you wish.

You should especially avoid contact with people at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. With regular flu, people may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms to up to 7 days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods. People infected with the novel H1N1 are likely to have similar patterns of infectiousness as with seasonal flu.

Even after you return to work or school, you should continue to cough into your sleeve and practice hand hygiene as a precaution and **avoid close contact with people you know to be at increased risk of influenza-related complications.**