

Flu information

What is novel H1N1 flu?

The flu is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Novel H1N1 flu is a new influenza virus that is spreading worldwide among people. It is sometimes called “swine flu”. This flu season, more people may get sick than during a regular flu season.

How serious is the flu?

The flu, including H1N1, can cause mild to severe illness. It can be very serious for people at increased risk for flu complications. Those at increased risk for complications from the flu include:

- Children younger than 5 years old
- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- Persons with certain medical conditions such as asthma or other lung problems, diabetes, weakened immune systems, kidney disease, heart problems and neurological and neuromuscular disorders.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches



- Headaches
- Chills and fatigue
- Sometimes diarrhea and vomiting

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses are spread mostly from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with influenza. People also may get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

For people with asthma

I have asthma, how can I protect myself?

People with asthma are in the priority group to receive seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines because they are at higher risk for flu-related complications, such as pneumonia. All people should take these steps to prevent the spread of germs, and protect your health:

- Get a seasonal flu shot.
- Get the H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue away. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not your bare hands, if you do not have a tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth as germs are spread that way.

- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Consult your doctor to create (or update an existing) written Asthma Control Plan for the upcoming seasonal/H1N1 flu season. H1N1 illness may trigger asthma symptoms, so consult with your doctor and have a plan in place before you become sick. Follow this plan for daily treatment and for controlling your asthma symptoms.
- If your child has asthma, make sure that his or her updated, written Asthma Control Plan is on file at school or at the daycare center, and that all caregivers and family members are aware of it. Be sure that the plan and medication(s) are easy to get to when needed.

Should I get a seasonal flu shot?

Yes. Everyone with asthma who is older than 6 months should get a shot every year to protect against the seasonal flu. Children aged 6 months to 8 years who never have had a seasonal flu shot will need two doses the first time. Children who have had a seasonal flu shot in the past only need one shot. Persons with asthma *should not* use the inhaled “FluMist®” vaccine.

Should I get the 2009 H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available?

Yes. Everyone with asthma who is aged 6 months to 64 years should get the 2009 H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available. The 2009

flu shot is not the same as the shot for seasonal flu.

What can I do if I get sick with the flu?

If you have a medical condition like asthma and you develop flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, **call your doctor** or get medical attention. You may be at higher risk of developing serious complications from the flu, including H1N1. Your doctor will decide if you need antiviral drugs.

Certain antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight the flu virus by stopping it from growing in your body. They make you feel better faster and may prevent serious flu problems. The antiviral drug Tamiflu® (also known as oseltamivir) is recommended for treating 2009 H1N1 virus infection and may be prescribed for persons with asthma. Flu treatments work best if they start within two days of when you get flu-like illness.

Persons with flu infections might also get bacterial infections. These persons will also need to take antibiotics to fight the bacterial infection. Some signs of bacterial infection are severe or prolonged illness, or illness that seems to get better but then gets worse.

Aspirin *should not* be given to children or teenagers who have the flu. This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

You may be ill with the flu for a week or longer. Stay at home, except to seek medical treatment, drink plenty of fluids, and rest as much as possible. Your fever should be gone

without the use of fever-reducing medicine for at least 24 hours before returning to school or work.

When should I get emergency medical care?

Emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

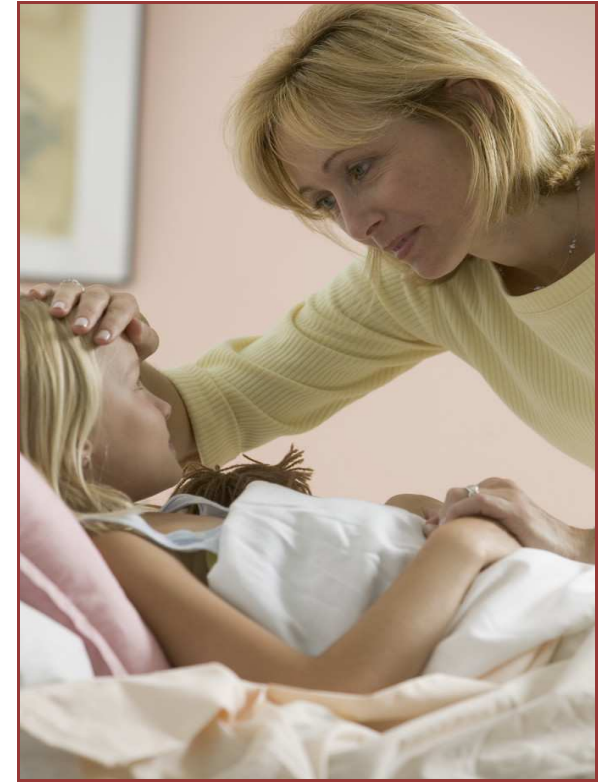
For children:

- 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

For adults:

- 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

Visit www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov for more information.



H1N1 Flu: A Guide for People with Asthma



Will County Health Department
501 Ella Ave. Joliet, IL 60433
(815)727-8480