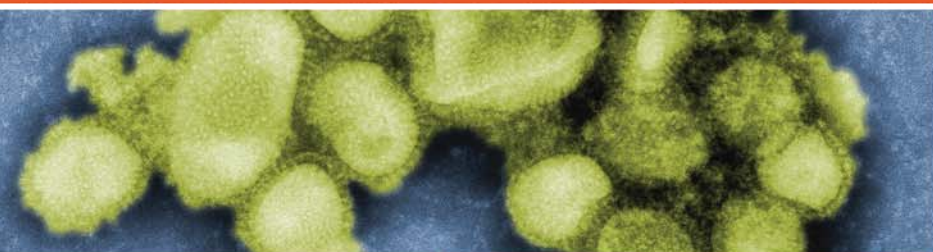


Information about the Flu

– Including the new H1N1 Flu –
for People with Certain Medical Conditions



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Preparing for Flu Season

A new and very different influenza virus called “2009 H1N1” flu has emerged and is causing illness in people worldwide. Scientists believe the new H1N1 virus will cause illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States over the coming months.

This flu season may be more severe than usual because of the new H1N1 virus. This means that more people may become sick and more people may get seriously sick. Also, regular seasonal flu viruses will continue to spread and cause illness too.

People with certain health conditions may face special medical challenges during flu season. These health conditions include:

- Pregnancy
- Cancer
- Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
- Chronic lung disease [including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)]
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Neurological disorders (including nervous system, brain or spinal cord)
- Neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis)
- People with weakened immune systems (including people with AIDS or those who are receiving chemotherapy)

It's important to remember that people who have one or more of the conditions listed above can have a more severe illness from any influenza infection, including illness with the new H1N1 virus. Unless your health care provider says not to, keep taking your medication even if you become sick with the flu.

If you have one of these health conditions and you develop flu-like symptoms, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

Flu-like symptoms (including the symptoms of the new H1N1 flu) include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have diarrhea and vomiting.

If you have one of the health conditions listed, during a flu outbreak you should:

- Seek medical attention if you have a fever and symptoms of the flu.
- Limit contact with crowds and avoid crowded places. If you can't avoid crowded settings, consider wearing a facemask or respirator to decrease your chances of getting infected. Be careful not to touch your face and wash your hands often.
- It is estimated that staying at least six feet away from a person who sneezes or coughs may be a safe distance.
- Talk with your doctor about having a two-week supply of medication.
- Keep the name, phone number, and office address of your doctor or health care provider with you at all times. Find out the best way to communicate with your doctor.
- Get a written record of the kind of chronic disease(s) you have and the treatment you are receiving. Keep this information with you at all times.
- Prepare a typed or printed list of all medications usually taken and the times of day they are taken. Also include necessary medical supplies or equipment such as syringes, strips, lancets if you have diabetes, or oxygen if you have COPD.
- Determine how you will access ongoing medical care such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Ask your health care provider if they have a plan to deal with a severe flu outbreak (including new H1N1 flu).
- If you use medications for your condition, continue taking it even if you become sick with the flu, unless your doctor or health care provider says otherwise.
- Be alert to changes in your breathing, especially if you have heart failure, congestive heart disease or COPD. Promptly report changes to your doctor or health care provider.
- Inform family members or close friends of your medical condition.

Protect Yourself

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?

Take time to get vaccinated.

- CDC recommends a yearly seasonal flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against seasonal flu. While there are many different flu viruses, the seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three flu viruses research indicates will be most common. The vaccine can protect you from getting sick from these three viruses or it can make your illness milder if you get a flu virus that is related to those in the vaccine.
- A seasonal vaccine will not protect you against the new H1N1 flu. This new H1N1 virus is very different from the seasonal viruses in the seasonal flu vaccine.
- A vaccine against the new H1N1 virus is being produced and will be available in the coming months as an option for people at high risk of serious complications from infection with the new H1N1 virus.

Take everyday preventive actions.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze to keep from spreading flu viruses to others. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.*
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius. Follow this recommendation even if you are taking flu antiviral drugs.
- While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Take antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them.

- If you get seasonal or new H1N1 flu, antiviral drugs can be used for treatment. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body.
- Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications.
- Antiviral drugs may be especially important for people who are very sick with the flu or for people who are sick and have a health condition that places them at greater risk of flu complications.
- For maximum effectiveness, antiviral drugs should be taken as soon as possible after symptoms begin.



Get ready for the new H1N1 Flu

If you do not prepare before a flu outbreak, it may be harder for you to follow important health advice. Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so.

Have a two-week supply of items needed for an extended stay at home. It would be useful to have these items on hand and would help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious. This might include:

Two-Week Supply List

- Over-the-counter medicines
- Alcohol-based hand cleaners*
- Tissues
- Prescription medications that are taken regularly
- Canned soups, hydration fluids, etc.
- Facemasks (for use by the sick person if able when around other people)

**Though the scientific evidence is not as extensive as that on hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizers, other hand sanitizers that do not contain alcohol may be useful for killing flu germs on hands in settings where alcohol-based products are prohibited.*



For more information about preparing for the flu, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or www.flu.gov, or contact your doctor or local health department. You can also contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-CDC-INFO.