



Asthma Information for Patients and Parents of Patients

September 23, 2009,

- Anyone with asthma is at higher risk for flu-related complications, such as pneumonia. Along with everyone else, if you have asthma you should:
 - 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. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder not your bare hands;
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth (germs are spread that way); and
 - stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- If you have asthma, you should follow an updated, written Asthma Action Plan developed with your doctor. 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 Action Plan is on file at school or at the daycare center. Be sure that the plan and medication(s) are easy to get to when needed.
- 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.
- Everyone with asthma, aged 6 months to 64 years, should get the 2009 H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available. The 2009 H1N1 flu shot is not the same as the shot for seasonal flu. Children aged 6 months through 9 years will require two doses of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.
- Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight flu virus by keeping the virus 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 treatment of 2009 H1N1 virus infection, and can be used by people with asthma. Because it is best if treatment start within two days of when you get sick for it to work best, people with asthma should make a plan with their healthcare professional for what they should do if they develop influenza-like illness.
- Influenza infections can lead to or occur with bacterial infections. Therefore, some people will also need to take antibiotics. More severe or prolonged illness or illness that seems to get better, but then gets worse again may be an indication that a person has a bacterial infection. A written Asthma Action Plan should be, developed with your doctor for daily treatment and for control of asthma symptoms.
- Warning! Do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have the flu; this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome. For more information about Reye's syndrome, visit the National Institute of Health website
- To learn more about these recommendations and for updates, visit www.cdc.gov/flu/ "Interim Guidance for Novel H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu): Taking Care of a Sick Person in Your Home" on the Web or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.