

Seasonal and 2009 H1N1 Flu: A Guide For Parents

Flu information

What is flu?

Flu (influenza) is an infection of the nose, throat, and lungs caused by flu viruses. There are many different flu viruses. Sometimes a new flu virus starts spreading among people and makes them sick.

What is 2009 H1N1 flu?

2009 H1N1 flu (swine flu) is a new flu virus that is spreading worldwide. Since this is a new virus, more people are expected to become ill with 2009 H1N1 than seasonal flu due to a lack of immunity.

How serious is flu?

Most people with 2009 H1N1 have had mild illness and have not needed medical care. The same is true of seasonal flu. However, the flu can be serious, especially for young children. Risk is highest in children younger than age 2 and children of any age who have certain chronic medical conditions.

These conditions include asthma or other lung problems, diabetes, weakened immune systems, kidney disease, heart problems, blood cell problems such as sickle cell disease, and neurological and neuromuscular disorders. Children with these conditions can have more severe illness from any flu, including from the 2009 H1N1 flu virus.

How does flu spread?

2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu spreads from person to person through coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with flu. You may also get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

What are symptoms of flu?

Symptoms of seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. Some people with the flu will not have a fever.

How long can a sick person spread flu to others?

People infected with seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu spread the virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. The time when a child is most likely to spread the flu is while they have a fever.

Protect your child

How can I protect my child against flu?

Get a seasonal flu shot for yourself and your child. Get a 2009 H1N1 flu shot for your child. Ask your doctor whether you should get one too. Take – and encourage your child to take – everyday steps to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Cough and sneeze in your sleeve *OR*
- Cover nose and mouth with tissue, then
 - *Put tissue in the trash*
 - *Wash hands immediately*
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- If someone in your household is sick, try to keep the sick person in a separate room from others in the house.
- Keep surfaces like bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, kitchen counters and children's toys clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by sick persons in your household.



Is there a vaccine to protect my child from 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu?

- The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is recommended for all children and young adults 6 months through 24 years of age. Others, including close contacts of children younger than 6 months of age and adults with certain chronic medical conditions, are recommended for vaccination too. More information about the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine and the seasonal flu vaccine is available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov or the Oakland County Health Division website at www.oakgov.com/health.
- A yearly seasonal flu vaccine is also an important step in protecting your child. This vaccine is recommended for children 6 months through 18 years of age and all people who are close contacts (caregivers) of children younger than 6 months of age.



Is there medicine to treat the flu?

Antiviral drugs can treat both seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu. Priority use is to treat people who are seriously ill (hospitalized) or people who are sick with the flu and either have a medical condition or are in an age group that puts them at high risk of serious flu complications. Antiviral drugs can make people feel better and get better sooner, and may prevent serious complications. These drugs need to be prescribed by a doctor and work best when started during the first 2 days of illness. These drugs can be given to children.

What should I use for hand washing?

Washing hands with soap and running water (for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice) will help protect against many germs. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.

If your child is sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

If your child is 5 years of age or older and otherwise healthy and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough, consult your doctor as needed. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.

If your child is younger than 5 (especially younger than 2) or of any age and has a medical condition like asthma, diabetes, or a neurologic problem and develops flu-like symptoms, ask a doctor if your child should be examined. This is because younger children (especially children younger than 2) and children who have chronic medical conditions may be at higher risk of serious complications from flu. Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even children who have always been healthy or have had the flu before can still get a severe case of flu.

Call or take your child of any age to a doctor right away if they have:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes, or asthma) and develop flu symptoms, including a fever and/or cough

Can my child go to school, day care or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and avoid giving the flu to other children.

When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone. (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F or 37.8°C.



Department of Health & Human Services

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