

Novel H1N1 Flu Update for Parents

Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), August 2009

Q: *What is the current status of novel Influenza A (H1N1)?*

A: During the summer months, the novel (A) H1N1 flu continued its spread across the U.S. This level of flu activity was higher than what we expect for this time of year. Most of the cases have been among persons 5 to 24 years old.

Q: *Who is at increased risk of complications from the novel H1N1 virus?*

A: Pregnant women, children less than 5 years old, persons whose immune systems are compromised, and persons with chronic medical conditions have a higher risk of complications. People 65 years and older have been less affected than younger age groups so far.

Q: *What about a vaccine?*

A: The best way to protect against the flu is to get a yearly vaccine. This year the CDC recommends two different vaccines for everyone over the age of 6 months: one against the seasonal flu, the other to protect persons from the novel H1N1 flu. Shortages are not expected, but if supplies of the novel H1N1 vaccine are limited initially, the following priority groups should get it first:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Children 6 months through 4 years of age
- Children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact

Followed by:

- Children and adults from 5 to 24 years
- People aged 25 to 64 years with underlying medical conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes)

As vaccine supply increases and demand among priority groups is met, the CDC recommends that other adults receive the novel H1N1 vaccine.

Q: *What are symptoms for the novel H1N1 flu?*

A: The symptoms are similar to the seasonal flu: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills, and fatigue. Some people also report vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Q: *What should I do if I have flu symptoms?*

A: The same basic steps apply to both children and adults:

- **Call the doctor.** He/she may prescribe antiviral medicines if you are at higher risk of complications.
- **Stay home** until at least 24 hours after you have no fever (100° F) or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- **Get plenty of rest.**
- **Drink clear fluids**, such as water, broth or sports drinks to keep from becoming dehydrated.
- **Limit contact with others** as much as possible. Stay in a room separate from common areas of the house, if possible, and keep the door of that room closed.

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(continued)

Q: *What about symptom-relief for children?*

- A:
- Do not give a child younger than 18 years any aspirin or products that contain aspirin.
 - Children 5 years and older can take Tylenol®, Advil®, Motrin® or Nuprin®. Follow label directions for dosing.
 - Children younger than 4 years should not be given over-the-counter cold medications without speaking with a doctor.
 - For children younger than 2 years, use a cool-mist humidifier and suction bulb to help clear away mucus.

Q: *I'm pregnant. What if I have flu symptoms?*

- A: Pregnant women are at increased risk for complications if infected with the flu virus. If you are pregnant and have flu symptoms, call your doctor right away.

Q: *When should I get my child to the doctor or the Emergency Room?*

- A: Seek urgent care right away if your child has one of the following:
- 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 he or she does not want to be held
 - Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Q: *What can my family do to prevent the spread of flu?*

- A: Basic hygiene can help stop the spread of both seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu. Teach everyone in your family.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw your used tissues in the trash can.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use hand sanitizer if you cannot wash your hands.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
 - Get your flu vaccine – for seasonal flu *and* for novel H1N1 flu.

Q: *Where can I get more information?*

- A:
- For the most current information, check out the CDC website: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.
 - Ask H1N1 flu questions on-line at the Virginia Department of Health website: www.vdh.virginia.gov or call its toll free H1N1 hotline, Mondays through Fridays, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at **1-877-ASK-VDH3** (1-877-275-8343).

LET'S ALL GET READY!

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT OUR COMMUNITY IS DOING