

Vaccination Bulletins – Getting Ready for Flu Season

9/6 Getting Ready for Flu Season

How does flu spread?

The flu usually spreads from person to person in respiratory droplets when people who are infected cough or sneeze. People occasionally may become infected by touching something with influenza virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose or eyes. Healthy adults may be able to infect others **1 day before** getting symptoms and up to **5 days after** getting sick. Therefore, it is possible to give someone the flu before you know you are sick as well as while you are sick.

Who Should Get Vaccinated

In general, anyone who can get vaccinated, but it is recommended that some people get it every year.

People who should get vaccinated each year are:

1. Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
2. Pregnant women
3. People 50 years of age and older
4. People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
5. People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
6. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including health care workers, household contacts of persons at high risk for flu complication, household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

When to Get Vaccinated – The timing of flu season varies, but it is best to get vaccinations starting in September and continuing in December, January, and beyond.

9/13 Be Prepared! Tips to Prevent Flu

The **single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated** each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu.

- ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- ✓ If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.
- ✓ Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.
- ✓ Practice other good health habits: Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

9/20 Think You Have the Flu?

Be Aware of Common Flu Symptoms - Influenza usually starts suddenly and may include the following symptoms:

- Fever (usually high), Headache, Tiredness (can be extreme), Cough, Sore throat, Runny or stuffy nose, Body aches, Diarrhea and vomiting (more common among children than adults)

Having these symptoms does not always mean that you have the flu. Many different illnesses, including the common cold, can have similar symptoms.

If You Get Sick - Most healthy people recover from the flu without complications. If you get the flu:

- Stay home from work or school.
- Get lots of rest, drink plenty of liquids, and avoid using alcohol and tobacco.
- There are over-the-counter (OTC) medications to relieve the symptoms of the flu (but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever).

- Remember that serious illness from the flu is more likely in certain groups of people including people 65 and older, pregnant women, people with certain chronic medical conditions and young children.
- Consult your doctor early on for the best treatment.

9/27 What is Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu)?

What is swine flu?

- Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. Human infections can happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs, but it can also be spread person to person.

What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 flu in people?

→ The symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include **fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue**. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu may cause a worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions.

How do you catch H1N1/swine flu?

Spread of swine flu can occur in two ways:

- Through contact with infected pigs or environments contaminated with swine flu viruses.
- Through contact with a person with swine flu. Human-to-human spread of swine flu also has been documented and is thought to occur in the same way as seasonal flu. Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people. H1N1 flu seems to spread easily and primarily this way.

What if I think I have swine flu? **If you have flu-like symptoms, visit your doctor to discuss the best treatment options.**

References:

Centers for Disease Control - <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/takingcare.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms.htm>

Office of Public Health Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section - www.infectiousdisease.dhh.louisiana.gov