

H1N1 Influenza: What You Need to Know!

Why is this Influenza Different?

- Outbreak of the new strain was at the “wrong” time of the year (flu usually starts in the late fall and winter).
- Instead of affecting the elderly, like regular seasonal influenza, H1N1 hits young people the hardest.
- It has caused some serious illnesses and deaths in pregnant women, children, young adults and those with underlying health problems.

How is H1N1 Spread?

- H1N1 virus is thought to be spread in the same manner as seasonal flu.
- Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza.
- People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it; then touching their mouth or nose. (It can live on surfaces for 3-8 hours and normal household cleaners are thought to kill the virus.)

Signs and Symptoms of H1N1 are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu:

Fever
Cough
Sore throat
Runny or stuffy nose
Body aches
Headache
Chills
Fatigue

*A significant number of people infected with H1N1 have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

What can be done to help People Stay Healthy?

- The best way to prevent the spread of any strain of influenza is to:
 - Frequent, thorough hand washing, especially after coughing and/or sneezing
 - If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
 - Cough and sneeze into the inside of your elbow
 - Dispose of contaminated items (tissues, etc.) immediately.

CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) recommend that individuals with influenza-like illness remain at home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F or greater), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen.

Priority groups for Vaccination against H1N1 set by the CDC:

- Pregnant women,
- People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age,
- Healthcare and emergency services personnel with direct patient contact,
- Children, adolescents and young adults between the ages of 6 mths and 24 yrs
- People from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

*The elderly (65+) are used to being “first in line” for the flu vaccine, but not for H1N1.