

FLU

PREVENTION & TREATMENT



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What is flu?

Flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.

What is the difference between seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 Flu (also called Novel H1N1 or Swine Flu)?

Seasonal flu is caused by three types of viruses that change slightly from year to year. 2009 H1N1 virus is a new virus of swine origin that first caused illness in March 2009. All four viruses cause an illness with similar symptoms.

What are the symptoms and complications of flu?

Symptoms of flu include a high fever, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, extreme tiredness, muscle aches, vomiting, diarrhea, and shortness of breath. Usually the symptoms have a sudden onset. Complications of flu include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

How does flu spread?

Seasonal and 2009 H1N1 flu (swine flu) are contracted by inhaling respiratory droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. A person can also become infected by touching an object contaminated by flu virus (possibly from a hand that covered a sneeze) and then touching his/her mouth, nose or eyes.



What can be done to prevent spreading or getting flu?

- Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, and wiping or blowing your nose.
- Use paper tissues when wiping or blowing your nose and throw them away after use.
- Cough into a tissue or the inside of your elbow instead of into your bare hand.
- Avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes as germs enter the body through these openings.
- Stay home if you have flu symptoms until you are fever-free without fever medicine for 24 hours.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay away from crowds, if possible.
- Get a flu shot.

Who should get flu shots?

Beginning in fall 2009, two types of flu shots will be available. One is the usual seasonal flu shot, which gives protection against the 3 seasonal flu viruses, and the other is the 2009 H1N1 flu shot, which gives protection against the 2009 H1N1 Type A (Swine) flu. A seasonal flu shot will NOT protect against 2009 H1N1 flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu shot will NOT protect against seasonal flu. So, shots with both vaccines may benefit most people.



Anyone 6 months of age and older can get both types of vaccinations. Certain groups of people have a higher risk of getting seasonal or 2009 H1N1 flu or developing complications from these illnesses and are especially encouraged to get both types of flu shots. These groups include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- People between the ages of 6 months and 24 years
- People ages 25 through 64 who are at higher risk because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

All people age 50 and older should get a seasonal flu shot as they have more risk of complications from seasonal flu.

Persons age 65 and older have less risk for contracting 2009 H1N1 flu and are not included in priority groups for 2009 H1N1 flu vaccinations, but they may be vaccinated if they wish.





When is the best time to get flu shots?

In 2009 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that seasonal flu vaccinations be given as soon as the vaccine is available.

Vaccinations for H1N1 flu should also be given when that vaccine is available. It takes two weeks for a vaccine to become fully effective after it is given.

Can I get flu from a flu shot?

No. The viruses in both the seasonal flu shot and the 2009 H1N1 flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get either type of flu from a flu shot.

What are the side effects that might occur from a flu shot?

The most common side effect is soreness at the injection site. Sometimes, a low grade fever and aches occur after a flu shot. These symptoms usually last only one or two days.

What can I do if I think I have caught the flu?

See your doctor as soon as possible. He or she can perform a simple test to determine whether or not you have the flu. This test, however, cannot differentiate between seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu. Your doctor may prescribe anti-viral medication for you if you have the flu. The medication may decrease the duration of your illness if you begin taking it within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms.

Where can I get more information about flu and flu vaccines?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web sites at www.cdc.gov/flu and www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu are excellent sources of information about seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu.

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