

## H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

### *How to Protect Your Family and When to Seek Medical Care*

#### **How dangerous is the H1N1 flu?**

The H1N1 flu is not more dangerous than the regular seasonal flu. However, children and young adults get sick with the new flu more than older people. The symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills
- Fatigue
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

#### **How can I protect myself from getting the H1N1 flu?**

- Practice frequent hand washing with soap and water often, especially after being in public areas. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers work well.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, especially in public areas.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Get vaccinated when the H1N1 vaccine becomes available.

#### **When will the vaccine be available?**

- With the demand to produce both seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines this year, manufacturers responsible for making both vaccine strains are not producing enough to meet immediate order requests. Thus, we have only received about half of our seasonal flu vaccine order, and have currently exhausted our supply. We expect to receive more seasonal vaccine by the end of November and we will communicate this to our patients once we receive confirmation of delivery dates from the manufacturer.
- We expect to receive H1N1 flu vaccine by the end of October and we will communicate this to our patients once we receive confirmation.

#### **What should I do if I have or a family member has flu symptoms?**

Most people should recover from the H1N1 flu without needing medical care. Here's what you need to do:

- Stay home until at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine).
- People who are sick after seven days should continue to stay home until at least 24 hours after symptoms have gone away.

#### **Do I need to see my physician or go to the Emergency Room if I have flu symptoms?**

Most people with the flu do not need to see their physician or go to an ER. People who **should seek medical attention immediately** are those at risk of getting seriously ill from the flu, and people who have symptoms that indicate severe illness (see below).

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### **Who is at risk to get seriously sick from the flu?**

- Children younger than five, but especially children younger than two years old;
- People 65 and older;
- Pregnant women;
- People who have serious chronic illnesses, especially lung disease and immune compromise (e.g. AIDS, taking high doses of steroids).

### **What are symptoms that could indicate severe illness?**

#### **In kids:**

- Fast breathing;
- Bluish skin color;
- Not drinking enough fluids;
- Not waking up or not interacting;
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held;
- Flu symptoms that go away and then return after a few days.

#### **In adults**

- Trouble breathing;
- Lightheadedness;
- Confusion;
- Severe or persistent vomiting.

### **Don't I need a test and treatment if I have flu symptoms?**

- Most patients with flu symptoms do not need a test to tell them they have the flu. Doctors only need to do the test in special circumstances.
- Nearly everyone recovers from the flu without any medications. We are only recommending medications for patients who are at risk of getting seriously ill from the flu, or who have symptoms that indicate severe illness (see above).

### **If I have the flu, how do I protect my family from getting sick?**

- Family members who are not sick do not need treatment **unless** they are at risk of getting seriously ill (see above). If they do fall into a high-risk group, contact your physician.
- Limit contact with healthy family members as much as possible until you are feeling better.
- Cough into the inside of your elbow, not into your hand.
- Make sure everyone in your family washes their hands or uses hand gel often.
- Nobody needs to wear a mask at home.

### **Do I need to cancel my outpatient appointment at NorthShore?**

- Keep your appointment unless you have the flu.
- If you need to cancel, please call to reschedule.
- If you must keep your appointment, let the clinical staff know and get a mask from the receptionist when you arrive. Place mask over your nose and mouth.

### **Where can I find the latest information on H1N1 flu?**

- [www.northshore.org](http://www.northshore.org)
- [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)
- [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)
- [www.omhrc.gov](http://www.omhrc.gov) for resources in other languages
- The Illinois Department of Health Flu Hotline at 1-866-848-2094