

# Answers to Your Questions About the Novel H1N1 Virus

Huntsville Hospital, Huntsville Hospital for Women & Children and Madison Urgent Care are prepared for the flu season including the novel H1N1 flu. Below you'll find some questions that seem to be on everyone's mind. Keep in mind, this is the most current information available, but the situation is constantly changing.

## **What are the symptoms of the novel H1N1 virus?**

Symptoms are similar to those of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

## **Who is most at risk from the novel H1N1 virus?**

- Pregnant women
- Those who live with or care for infants less than 6 months old
- Healthcare and emergency services workers
- Anyone younger than 24 years old
- Those 25-64 with chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

## **What special steps do I need to take to protect myself and my family?**

- Get the novel H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available.
- If you have flu symptoms, you should stay home until free of fever and signs of fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing drugs
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and dispose of it in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

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

All indications are that it will be available by mid-fall.

## **How important is it to get vaccinated?**

Those in high-risk groups should get vaccinated for their own safety and the safety of their families. The vaccine, which can be administered as an injection or nasal mist, will provide the best level of protection available.

## **How much do we know about the safety and/or effectiveness of the vaccine?**

It is believed that for the novel H1N1 virus, vaccination could prevent illness in 70-90 percent of those who are immunized. It also should reduce hospitalizations and deaths. The safety and effectiveness of this new vaccine is expected to be similar to that of a seasonal flu vaccine.

*(over for more information)*



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**Will the vaccine make me feel like I have the flu?**

The flu shot cannot give you the flu. Some people may have mild symptoms for a couple of days as their body builds an immune response. These symptoms are very mild compared to developing influenza. Acetaminophen or ibuprofen will help. The most common side effect of immunization is a sore arm.

**How will the vaccine be administered?**

The novel H1N1 vaccine will be administered in two doses, given approximately three to four weeks apart. Although the first dose will provide a level of protection, your best protection will be two weeks after the second dose. Details about how the vaccine will be given are not finalized. If you have questions, contact your family physician.

**Should my children be vaccinated for novel H1N1? How about my elderly parents?**

It is recommended that children between the ages of 6 months and 18 years be vaccinated. The novel H1N1 virus has particularly affected those in this age group. Currently, the elderly do not appear to comprise a high risk group for novel H1N1.

**Can I have the novel H1N1 vaccine if I'm pregnant?**

Pregnant women are among those that should be first in line for the vaccine. They may receive the vaccine at any time during their pregnancy.

**Do I need a seasonal flu shot too, and when should I get that?**

You should get vaccinated against the seasonal flu as soon as possible. Call your family doctor for more information.

**What if I get sick?**

If you get the flu, stay home from work, school and social gatherings and do not run errands for several days, until you are no longer contagious.

**When should I seek emergency medical care?**

If you have any of the following symptoms:

- *Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath*
- *Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen*
- *Sudden dizziness*
- *Confusion*
- *Severe or persistent vomiting*
- *Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough*

**Where can I get more information?**

- Visit [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) hotline, 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636), is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY: 1-888-232-6348. The website is [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Questions can be e-mailed to [dcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:dcinfo@cdc.gov).
- Alabama Department of Public Health 1-866-264-4073
- Links to state departments of public health can be found at [www.cdc.gov/ther.htm#states](http://www.cdc.gov/ther.htm#states)



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