

INFLUENZA—WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Information from cdc.gov.

On June 11 **World Health Organization (WHO)** stated that a global pandemic of **H1N1** influenza was underway. It continues to spread and at that time more than seventy countries had reported cases.

It has been called **Swine flu** because the virus is similar to one that usually occurs in pigs in the U.S.

The virus can survive *two to eight hours* on surfaces. The virus is killed **by heat 75 to 100 degrees and by chlorine, soap, hydrogen peroxide and iodine based antiseptics. It is contagious from one day before symptoms develop until seven days after you get sick.**

Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, *sudden dizziness, confusion, and severe or persistent vomiting. If flu symptoms improve then chills and fever return you should see a physician.*

At high risk are people over 65 years, children under 5 years, pregnant women and people with chronic health conditions.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: *Stay informed (cdc.gov). Be aware of how flu is spread - person to person (coughing, sneezing) and Take action—* 1) Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze and discard Kleenex in trash. 2) Wash hands often with soap and water or use alcohol hand cleansers and rub until dry (effective). 3) Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. 4) Stay at home when ill, limit contact with others. 5) Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.

MEDICATIONS: Communicable Disease Center (CDC) states use of antiviral drugs is recommended but are by prescription. They fight the flu by keeping the virus from reproducing in the body thereby keeping it from worsening and prevent complications.

The H1N1 injection is separate from the seasonal flu vaccine and is recommended for pregnant women, people who live with or care for children under six months, all health care personnel, children 6 months through 4 years and children 5 through 18 years who have chronic health conditions.

SHOULD I TAKE SEASONAL FLU SHOTS?:

FACT: Flu viruses are constantly changing and so must be updated yearly. Each year WHO and CDC work together to determine what three strains of flu virus world over will be the most common, virulent and dangerous to the population. They actually look at areas whose flu season is ahead of ours and determine the three strains to be developed into the vaccine. Getting a flu shot may not prevent you from getting the flu (there are many, many different strains and constantly changing) but it may help in cutting down the severity and preventing complications.

You may take the flu vaccine in two methods;

Nasal spray –Live attenuated (weakened) intranasal Virus {LAIV}

Injection intramuscular - - Inactivated (dead) virus

It takes two weeks for either method to become effective.

INJECTIONS are recommended for *adults above 50 years of age, children 6 months to 2 years, asthmatic children, people with long term health problems, those with muscle or nerve disorders or have weakened immune systems or are pregnant.*

WHO SHOULDN'T TAKE SHOTS: People with allergy to eggs or thimerosal. Those who have had Guillain-Barre Syndrome. People who are ill or running a fever (wait until you recover)

MY EXPERIENCE: I have received the flu shot for many years. I find I don't even catch colds like I used to. I feel it builds up my immune system.

This article is longer than usual, but I feel it is important for the public to be aware of accurate information in regard to influenza prevention, symptoms and treatment. CDC and WHO do an exceptionally good job trying to protect us.

CDC says there will be plenty of vaccine this year but there may be a delay in shipping from the manufacturers to the providers.

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