



## What You Need to Know About The H1N1 (swine flu) Virus and Seasonal Flu

Children and adults who have OI are advised to protect themselves from exposure to the flu virus and to seek medical care as soon as symptoms appear. Because of already existing asthma and/or other breathing problems, and because respiratory infections are often more severe in people with OI, Seasonal and H1N1flu can be a serious problem.

You have probably already heard about the H1N1 flu (once called “swine flu”). You will probably be hearing much more about this special type of flu in the next few weeks and months. Some of the information is clear, but there is still a lot that even the experts don’t know about how serious this flu may be and how many people will be affected. This public health concern is a rapidly changing situation with the potential to become very serious. For up to date information regularly check the Centers for Disease Control websites [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov) and [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

Flu is primarily a respiratory infection and all flu spreads easily. The H1N1 is a concern because it is a new strain and few people have any immunity to it. Public health officials are concerned that a large number of people will be sick at the same time. The H1N1 flu is a separate illness from the seasonal flu that comes around each winter. It may show up sooner and affect more people.

### **Suggestions for People who Have OI**

- Talk to your doctor about getting the vaccine.
- See your doctor as soon as you feel ill or if someone in your family or work place has flu symptoms.
- Promptly seek medical attention if you have breathing difficulties.
- Talk to your doctor to determine if you should take an antiviral drug.

### **Suggestions for Staying Healthy and Managing Illness**

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; then throw away the tissue.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use an alcohol-based hand cleaner when water is not available.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Keep yourself and your children away from sick people.
- If you or your child is sick stay home from work or school.
- If you have a fever, stay home at least 24 hours after the fever has ended (without fever reducing medicine).
- Stay well hydrated. Becoming dehydrated is a common and potentially serious complication of all types of flu.
- Watch for signs that your child may need emergency medical care including: trouble breathing, severe vomiting, bluish or gray skin color.

### **What are the symptoms of H1N1 (swine flu)?**

The most common symptoms include fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat and muscle aches. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea also can occur. The infection may last 5-10 days.

### **How does this flu spread?**

Like other types of flu, H1N1 is spread mainly by person-to-person contact. The virus moves from one person to another through the spray when someone coughs or sneezes. People may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose or eye.

**How is H1N1 (swine flu) diagnosed?**

There are quick tests that can be done in your doctor's office.

**What medications are available?**

Two antiviral drugs Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) are available to treat infection with the H1N1 virus. Antiviral drugs can shorten how long a person feels sick but must be started very soon, possibly within 48 hours, after symptoms appear. At this time doctors recommend that people with respiratory problems avoid using Relenza.

Other treatments include fever reducing medicine, rest, and fluids.

**Should People who have OI get the H1N1 vaccine?**

Yes. People who have OI should talk to their doctors about getting both the vaccine for H1N1 and the vaccine for Seasonal Flu.

- The CDC is developing guidelines for who should be vaccinated and who should receive it first. People in the following groups will be among the first to receive the H1N1 vaccine: pregnant women, people who work with or care for children under age 6 months, everyone age 6 months – 24 years, and people age 25-64 with chronic illness especially lung problems that increases their risk for flu complications.
- People with respiratory problems including asthma should not use the intranasal vaccine.
- Adults who have OI, even those who are small in stature, will need only one dose of vaccine. Because of their immature immune systems, young children will need two doses of H1N1 vaccine.

**Information for Parents**

- Update your child's emergency contact information at school and day care.
- Plan ahead for back-up child care should sitters become ill or schools close.
- Plan ahead for child care if you children become ill.
- Talk to your doctors about getting yourself and your children vaccinated.
- Discuss with your child's doctor if your child should be kept home from school if flu shows up among his/her classmates.
- Teach your children good cough etiquette and proper hand washing.

**Information for Adults and college students with OI**

- Update your emergency contact information at school and work.
- Stay alert to public health announcements at work or on campus.
- Talk to your doctor about getting both the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccine.

**Information about Seasonal Flu**

The seasonal flu vaccine became available September first.

The CDC recommends an annual seasonal flu vaccine for people in several groups

- Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday,
- Pregnant women,
- People 50 years of age and older,
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions,
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu.

**NOTE**

- People who are allergic to eggs or latex usually should not get a flu shot and are advised to talk to their doctor.
- People with OI who have respiratory problems should also talk with their doctor about the need for the pneumonia vaccine.