

2009 – 2010 Flu Season Questions and Answers

www.ihacares.com Update #2

Q. What is the difference between Seasonal influenza and H1N1 influenza?

A. Seasonal flu viruses change from year to year and are closely related to one another. People who have had flu infections in the past usually have some immunity to seasonal flu viruses. H1N1 flu is caused by a new strain of influenza virus and has spread to many countries. Like other flu viruses, H1N1 is spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing and sometimes through touching objects contaminated with the virus. This strain is new and is very different from seasonal flu viruses as most people have little or no immunity to 2009 H1N1 flu.

Q. Who can or cannot receive the H1N1 vaccine?

A. H1N1 vaccine supplies are currently very limited throughout Michigan. At this time, H1N1 vaccine is ONLY available to those at greater risk of illness and of serious complications:

- pregnant women
- household and caregiver contacts of children younger than 6 months of age
- children from 6 months through 4 years of age
- children and adolescents age 5 through 18 years who have medical conditions associated with a higher risk of flu complications
- health and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient care

Q. Can a breastfeeding mother receive the flu shot or flumist?

A. Yes, either. Both seasonal influenza and 2009 H1N1 influenza shot and flumist are approved for nursing mothers. In fact, antibodies made by the mother can reduce the chances of the baby getting the flu.

Q. Can family members of close contacts of pregnant women be vaccinated with flumist nasal spray?

A. Yes, if they are healthy, non-pregnant people between the ages of 2 and 49. Pregnant women may be around people vaccinated with flumist nasal spray, however; they may not receive the flumist nasal spray themselves.

Q. Who should receive antiviral medication (Tamiflu, Relenza) to treat the flu?

A. Anyone who has severe symptoms, or who has been hospitalized for a flu-like illness, or who has tested positive for the 2009 H1N1 flu after being admitted to the hospital such as:

- children under 2 years of age who get the flu
- people over the age of 65 who get the flu
- pregnant women who get the flu
- residents of nursing homes or other chronic care facilities who get the flu
- children and teens under 19 who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- adults and children who have certain chronic diseases and who get the flu or have close contact with someone who does (lung disease – including asthma and emphysema; heart disease, kidney, liver and blood diseases; diabetes and other metabolic disorders or neuromuscular and developmental disorders).

Q. How long should I stay home if I am sick?

A. In the current flu conditions, individuals with symptoms of the flu should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever and are no longer using a fever-reducing medication. If the flu conditions are severe, the CDC recommends that a sick person stay home for up to 7 days.

Q. Where can I receive the most up-to-date information about seasonal and H1N1 flu?

A. Please visit the IHA website at www.ihacares.com or call the IHA flu hotline at 734.761.7300. Flu information is updated at least three times per week.