

Some Good Influenza Questions by our parents:
PTA meeting November 17, 2009
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(most recent info as of 11/09)

What are the symptoms of H1N1? How does this compare to the seasonal flu?

- Fever, sneezing, sore throat, cough, headache, and muscle or joint pains, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.
- Many of the symptoms are the same – can really only tell the difference by testing. Seasonal tends not to have the GI component.
- We should start seeing seasonal flu soon

If my child has already had H1N1, does he/she need the vaccine if it becomes available? If not, is this a reason for testing for H1N1 if a child has flu-like symptoms?

- If you have not been tested and you don't know for sure, and the person is in a category that is recommended to get the vaccine, yes. However, it is most likely that if they had some of the classic symptoms (fevers, cough, muscle aches, fatigue, sore throat, and GI issues) that it is what they had. There is not much else out there now.
- However, this is not a reason to be tested at this time. There are only so many tests available, and the costs/number of tests, etc needs to be looked at and used at this time for higher risk individuals (pregnant, being admitted to hospital, group homes, chronic illnesses, etc). You will still find some people who will test, but this is being discouraged.
- Along the same lines the RAPID influenza test should not be done anymore – it is not accurate and is supposed to be a screening tool however, it is about 30-70% accurate and this is not a good screening test. If your test is positive, it could be a “false” positive, and if it is negative, you could still have it.

When does one need to seek treatment?

- Best to not head to the ED initially – this is a sure place to catch something if you don't have anything yet!
- Call your pediatrician, review the symptoms.
- Make sure you or your child is drinking fluids, urinating.
- Warning signs:
 - Fast breathing/trouble breathing
 - Bluish skin color
 - Not drinking or tolerating fluids
 - Fever with a new rash
 - Irritable, can't hold child
 - Not waking up well, not interacting, listless
 - Flu like symptoms that improve then return with worse symptoms, cough, higher fever
 - In adults – confusion, dizziness, pain in chest or abdomen, breathing problems, severe vomiting

If someone in my household gets H1N1 is it likely that we will all get it?

- Just like any other virus, it is contagious. If you have fluid/droplet contact, you may. If you have HAD the virus last spring, or a small form of it during the season, no. However, it is not necessarily a bad thing to get it. You will now have immunity, as if you have had the vaccine. Along the same lines, don't TRY to get it either! Use all the precautions we have been using (good hand washing, wiping surfaces, etc).

Will the H1N1 vaccination be available through the schools and if so, when?

- I will defer this question to the administration

Who do you recommend receives the vaccination? Should we all try to get it if we can?

- Children aged 6 months to 24 yrs (with seasonal, it's up to 19 – but we are seeing some serious cases in young adults up to 24)
- Pregnant women
- 24-64 with health risks, medical conditions (once vaccine demands for other age groups are met, above 64 should get it as well)
- Any age who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age

What are the possible side effects of the vaccination?

- Live vaccine - mist
 - 2 -49, healthy, not pregnant, not congested
 - This is the better form in healthy children and adults, gives better immunity, broad coverage
 - “herd immunity”
 - Can see some minor “flu like” symptoms (low grade fever, aches, etc) but rare, and pass usually in one day
 - Weak form of virus
- Dead vaccine – injection
 - 6 months or older, healthy or not
 - 4 companies have this now, 3 have thimerosal and 1 does not (depends on what you think about preservatives)
 - Egg allergy
 - Most vaccines now for kids do not have thimerosal (which contains some mercury) or very little amts of it (since July 1999). However influenza vaccines are still made with it.
 - Most formulations designed for children do not have thimerosal, including seasonal and H1N1
 - Regardless, it is safe for children and pregnant women to have this vaccine

Does the vaccination require 1 or 2 doses?

- In children age 2-9, you need 2 doses (2nd dose 4 weeks later) if you have NOT had prev vaccine.
- Either form (mist or injection), but try to do 2nd dose the same as first
- There are new studies that state the first dose alone can offer up to 75% immunity.

Glenview seems to have seen a rash of H1N1 cases. Do you think we're out of the clear or can we expect to see cases multiply through the winter?

- Hard to say – “knock on wood” we have not had any increase in school absences, any real serious diseases other than what is expected at this time of year, but we have not really seen the “seasonal” flu yet. Whether we have some cross immunity is yet to be determined. Starting to see some other subtypes (i.e. H3N2)

Tamiflu (osteltamivir) – who should be getting it? Are we overtreating, undertreating?

- Should be used within first 1-2 days (but CAN be used if indicated after that as well)

- Can shorten disease by 1-2 days
- Can be given if pregnant (better than Relenza (zanamivir))
- Can be given to children of all ages (even below 1 if indicated)
- Nausea and vomiting most side effect
- Starting to see more resistance – most healthy people with flu do not need antivirals
- People with possible serious flu complications should be taking this:
 - Children younger than 2
 - Children between 2 and 4 (although lower risk)
 - Adults 65 or older
 - More serious flu symptoms (dizziness, chest symptoms, confusion, more significant respiratory changes)
 - Pregnant women and women up to 2 weeks from end of pregnancy
 - People with chronic medical conditions (asthma, heart failure, lung disease, diabetes, HIV)
 - People younger than 19 yrs who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy

How long is someone with the flu contagious?

- From a day before fever, until (at times) up to 5-7 days after symptoms

Information obtained from sources including:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu> CDC H1N1 site

<http://www3.niaid.nih.gov/> National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases – US Dept of Health and Sciences/NIH

