

H1N1 Update

December 8, 2009

Seasonal & H1N1 Flu General Info

Seasonal Flu Basics

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. It spreads from person-to-person and can cause mild to severe illness; and in some rare cases can lead to death.

In the United States, yearly outbreaks of seasonal flu usually happen during the fall through early spring.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.

Flu viruses can cause illness in people of any age group. Some groups are more likely to have complications from the seasonal flu. These include:

- Those age 65 and older
- Children younger than 2 years old
- People of any age who have chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, congestive heart failure, lung disease)

Complications from the flu can include:

- Bacterial pneumonia
- Ear or sinus infections
- Dehydration
- Worsening of chronic medical conditions

Vaccination is the best protection against contracting the flu. You need two vaccines to be fully protected this year. The seasonal flu vaccine is different from the H1N1 (Swine) flu vaccine. **Get the seasonal flu vaccination as soon as possible** and get the H1N1 (Swine) flu vaccination if you are eligible.

The flu vaccine is safe, and being vaccinated poses far less risk than being unvaccinated, and remaining at risk of developing the flu. Most importantly, being vaccinated protects our patients.

What You Can Do to Help Prevent the Spread of Flu and Stay Healthy

There are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy:

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Use hand sanitizers when soap and water are not immediately available
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Stay home when you are sick

H1N1 Flu Basics

2009 H1N1 (formerly "swine flu") is a new influenza virus which causes illness in people. This virus is NOT related to pigs and you cannot get the H1N1 flu from pork.

This new virus was first reported in the United States April 2009. The virus spreads from person-to-person in the same way as other influenza viruses. However, it appears to be more virulent (causes more symptoms) in certain population groups including:

- Pregnant women
- Children
- Individuals with certain chronic health conditions, especially those with lung diseases and immune system disorders

For some reason, older people who are otherwise healthy tend to have more immunity against the novel H1N1 flu.

How should I protect myself?

Vaccination is the best protection against contracting the flu. The H1N1 vaccine is a different vaccine from the seasonal flu vaccine. New London Hospital employees should consider getting the H1N1 vaccine now that it is available :

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children <6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel , NLH employees
- Persons between the ages of 6 months - 24 years
- People ages of 25- 64 years at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders

Is the vaccine safe?

The H1N1 vaccine appears to be as safe as seasonal flu vaccine. Individuals with egg allergies and prior severe complications from the seasonal flu vaccine should not receive the H1N1 vaccine.

What else should I do to prevent the spread of flu and stay healthy?

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Use hand sanitizers when soap and water are not immediately available
- Cover your cough and sneezes in your sleeve or with a tissue
- Stay home when you are sick

Further guidance and information regarding seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza can be found at the following sites:

- www.flu.gov
- www.cdc.gov/flu