



General Questions

Q. What are the symptoms of the flu?

A. Flu symptoms (both regular seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu) include fever, cough, sore throat, chills, runny nose, fatigue, body aches, headache and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

Q. How long should I stay home if I have the flu?

A. Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, without use of fever-reducing medicines and regardless of whether or not they are using antiviral drugs.

Q. Will seasonal and novel H1N1 be circulating at the same time this fall?

A. Yes. The CDC anticipates that the novel H1N1 influenza viruses will co-circulate with regular seasonal influenza viruses over our influenza season. The timing, spread and severity of novel H1N1 virus – in addition to our regular seasonal influenza viruses – are uncertain.

Fall Vaccine Plans

Q. What is currently being done to plan for the pandemic?

A. The State of Alaska is currently holding meetings in local communities to assist those communities with plans to distribute the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. Plans are also underway to help support hospitals and local clinics.

Q. When is the new H1N1 vaccine expected to be available in Alaska?

A. The new H1N1 vaccine is currently expected to be available in Alaska by mid-October.

Q. Where will the vaccine be available?

A. Statewide. Alaska is currently developing a vaccine delivery plan. Vaccine will be available in a combination of settings including: vaccination clinics organized by local health departments, health care provider offices, schools, and other private settings, such as pharmacies and workplaces.

Q. Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the H1N1 (swine) flu?

A. No. The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the new H1N1 flu. You will need both vaccines to be fully protected.

Priority and High Risk Groups

Q. Who will be recommended as priority groups to receive the new H1N1 vaccine?

A. There are currently five groups being considered as priorities:

- 1) Pregnant women;
- 2) Anyone who lives with or cares for children younger than 6 months old;
- 3) Health care and emergency service workers
- 4) Everyone age 6 months – 24 years old; and
- 5) Adults age 25 – 64 who have chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

Q. Who are considered to be at-risk for severe illness and therefore would be recommended to receive anti-viral treatment?

A. The following groups are at risk for severe illness from the flu:

- Children younger than 5 years old. The risk for severe complications from seasonal influenza is highest among children younger than 2 years old.
- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Persons with the following conditions:
 - Chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal (kidney), hepatic, hematological (including sickle cell disease), neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus);
 - Immunosuppression, including that caused by medications or by HIV;
 - Pregnant women;
 - Persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy; and
 - Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

Other Vaccine and Prevention Recommendations

Q. What other vaccine recommendations is the CDC making?

- All children age 6 months up to their 24th birthday should get **a seasonal flu vaccine**.
- Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine is recommended for:
 - All adults 65 or older
 - Anyone age 2 to 65 with chronic health problems (ask your health care provider)
 - Anyone age 19 to 65 who smokes or has asthma

Q. Are there other ways to prevent the spread of illness?

A. Take everyday actions to stay healthy.

- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, or cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Q. When are masks recommended? Which types?

- Patients ill with novel H1N1 flu should, if tolerable, wear a facemask (dust mask, surgical mask, painter's mask) when in close contact with others.
- Persons at increased risk for severe infection from the flu should wear a facemask (see above) in crowded group settings and during close contact with someone who is infected with the flu.
- Health care providers should wear an N-95 respirator when caring for patients with the novel H1N1 flu.

Antivirals

Q. What about the use of antivirals to treat novel H1N1 infection?

A. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This fall, antivirals may be prioritized for persons with severe illness or those at higher risk for flu complications.

Q. How much antiviral medication does the state have on-hand?

A. The Alaska stockpile total is approximately 92,000 courses of antiviral medications. The state has also stockpiled basic personal protective equipment, including surgical and N95 masks, gloves and pre-packaged PPE kits (gloves, goggles, and masks).

Q. Which antivirals are stockpiled?

A. The state's stockpiled antiviral medications include oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®). These antivirals are available in adult and child formulations.

Q. How much of the stockpile has already been distributed?

A. During May 2009, the state pre-positioned 24 percent of Alaska's total antiviral stockpile to the strategically determined supply sites statewide. The remainder of the antiviral stockpile is being stored at a centralized facility for future distribution.

For Schools

Q. What advice do you have for schools?

- Students and staff should stay home if they're sick
- Separate ill students and staff until they can go home
- Encourage regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Encourage routine cleaning of hard surfaces that are frequently touched
- Encourage early treatment of high-risk persons

Q. Will schools close due to the H1N1 flu virus?

A. School closure is not recommended at this time unless the number of sick faculty or students interferes with the school's ability to function.

The CDC also recommends that schools provide time for students to wash their hands whenever necessary and make tissues readily available to students and staff.

Q. Will vaccination against the new H1N1 influenza be mandatory?

A. The vaccine is not expected to be mandatory, nor is it required for school attendance, at this time. But remember – vaccines are the best public health tool we have to control the spread of influenza. Once the vaccines are available in sufficient quantities, anyone who can be vaccinated should be.

Emergency Information

Q. What should I do if my child is sick?

- Contact your child's doctor or health care provider
- Keep your child at home (no school; no daycare)
- Make sure your child drinks lots of liquids
- Wash your hands frequently

Q. Seek EMERGENCY medical care if your child has any of the following signs:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Is not drinking fluids
- Will not wake up or seems "out of it"