

FLU INFORMATION

Seasonal Influenza (Flu) & H1N1

What is the flu?

The flu is an infection of the lungs caused by influenza viruses.

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 flu is a new and very different influenza virus that is spreading among people worldwide. Flu is unpredictable, but scientists believe that the H1N1 virus will cause illness, hospital stays and deaths in the United States over the coming months.

How serious is the flu?

The flu can be very serious, especially for younger children, pregnant women and people of any age who have one or more chronic medical conditions. These conditions include asthma or other lung problems, diabetes, weakened immune systems, kidney disease, heart problems and neurological and neuromuscular disorders.

How does flu spread?

Both H1N1 flu and seasonal flu are thought to spread mostly from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with flu. People also may get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Most people get a high fever (over 100 degrees) very quickly. Other symptoms include cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea.

How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?

People infected with seasonal and H1N1 flu may be able to infect others from one day before getting sick to five to seven days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with H1N1 flu.

Protect Your Child

How can I protect my child against flu?

Get a seasonal flu vaccine for yourself and your child. Everyone who takes care of your child should be immunized, including grandparents, childcare providers and babysitters. Take everyday steps to prevent the spread of all flu viruses. This includes:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Or, use alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to keep your child from having close contact (about six feet) with sick people, including anyone in the household who is sick.
- Keep bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by sick persons.

Is there a vaccine to protect my child from H1N1 flu?

A vaccine against H1N1 flu will be available in the coming months. A vaccine against seasonal flu is available each fall and winter.

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

Antiviral drugs can treat both seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu. These drugs can make people feel better and get better sooner. They need to be prescribed by a doctor. They work best when started during the first two days of illness. These drugs can be given to children. People who are seriously ill or who have a medical condition that puts them at high risk of serious flu complications should receive these drugs first.

If Your Child is Sick

What can I do if my child gets sick?

If your child is five years or older and otherwise healthy and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever or cough, call your doctor. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids.

If your child is younger than five, or of any age and has a medical condition like asthma, diabetes or a neurological problem and develops flu-like symptoms, including a fever or cough, call your doctor or get medical attention. Younger children and children who have chronic medical conditions (like asthma or diabetes) may be at higher risk of serious complications from influenza infection. Talk with your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get a severe case of flu. Call or take your child to a doctor right away if your child of any age has:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or constant vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes or asthma) and develops flu-like symptoms, including a fever or cough.

Can my child go to school, day care or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children.

When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone. (The fever should be gone without them having taken a fever-reducing medicine.) A fever is defined as 100°F or 37.8°C.

For more information,
visit www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov or bronsonhealth.com/flu
call 1-800-CDC-INFO
e-mail fludoctor@bronsonhg.org