Keeping Kids Healthy

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota

One flu, two flu, old flu, new flu

This year, there are two different flu types you and your family should be aware of—the seasonal flu and a new virus called the novel H1N1 flu. Although both children and adults may be infected with these two types of flu, children are much more likely to get H1N1. **The vast majority of people who get influenza do not require any medical treatment, just lots of rest and liquids and perhaps medicine to reduce fever and pain.**

It's difficult to tell the two types of flu apart since they have similar symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat, and body aches. When kids show symptoms they should stay home from school to avoid spreading the infection to others. It's very important to get vaccinated this year—not only will it help keep all of you healthy, it will also help stop the spread of flu.

Tips to stay healthy

Fortunately, there are many simple things you can do to protect yourself and your children from the flu:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand-sanitizer
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, and mouth
- Clean your hands after shaking hands or other close contact with others and before eating or preparing food
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill
- Get enough sleep, exercise, and eat nutritious foods
- Get vaccinated—this year will require vaccination for each type of flu (recent news says they may combine both vaccines into one shot - but it's not official yet)
- Stay home when you are ill to avoid spreading infection to others
- Clean surfaces with products containing chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents, iodine-based antiseptics, alcohols, and other chemical germicides

Vaccination, vaccination

The best way to be protected against influenza is to be vaccinated. It is recommended that in addition to the seasonal influenza vaccination, children ages 6 months to 9 years old get two vaccinations for H1N1 and children age 10 and older get one vaccination for H1N1. The seasonal influenza vaccine will be available soon and will protect you throughout the influenza season. The H1N1 vaccine will likely be available in October and through the winter.

For more information about prevention, vaccinations, and care, visit: *www.childrensmn.org/flu*.

Is it the flu?

The symptoms for both types of flu are the same: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. In some cases with H1N1, you may also have diarrhea and vomiting. The severity of the symptoms can help determine if you have the flu or a cold. Chills, achy muscles, high fever, and severe fatigue tend to represent the flu while having a normal appetite, a low-grade fever, and no chills or headache may be symptomatic of a cold.

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Delivering Next Generation Care

Frequently and thoroughly washing your hands and using a hand sanitizer is a good way to keep from getting the flu. That's why Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota has provided 15,000 bottles of hand sanitizer to St. Paul and Minneapolis Public Schools.

What to do if you are feeling ill

- **If your child is mildly ill, stay home to avoid spreading the infection to others.** Children in day care and health care workers need to stay home 7 days from the onset of symptoms or until they are fever free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. School-age students and adults in non-health care settings may return to work and school when they are fever free for 24 hours without using a medicine to reduce the fever.
- People with mild influenza symptoms including a fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, and nasal congestion do not need to seek medical care and can be cared for at home.
- People with a high-risk condition for H1N1 who get sick should call their clinic. High-risk categories include:
  - Children under the age of five
  - Pregnant women
  - People with chronic conditions that make them vulnerable to illness such as asthma, diabetes, immune system problems, seizures, or other chronic conditions
- People with severe symptoms may need to be seen in the Emergency Department. These would be difficulty breathing, signs of dehydration, difficulty waking up, or difficulty controlling fever or pain.
- If symptoms progress or if a child's symptoms suddenly come back worse, prompt medical attention should be sought.
- If you are unsure what to do, call your primary care provider.

We will have more information as the flu season progresses. Keep an eye out for additional newsletters about the H1N1 flu vaccine and what to do if someone in your family gets the flu.