



Brenner Children's Hospital

Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

H1N1 Flu

Questions and Answers:

What is the difference between H1N1 (swine) flu and regular seasonal flu?

Both H1N1 and the seasonal flu are viruses that cause fever and affect the respiratory system. Usually in a season, we see only one type of flu. However, this year two strains will be in our region of the country. People are encouraged to get both the seasonal and H1N1 flu shots (when it is available in October) to protect themselves from becoming ill from both strains of flu.

How do I avoid getting the flu?

To prevent the spread of the H1N1 virus, experts at Brenner Children's Hospital recommend that you avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose. Hand washing is extremely important, as germs can live on surfaces and countertops and are easily shared when you touch your face after coming into contact with these germs. Avoiding close contact with sick people should also help in preventing illness. Pregnant women should not provide care to family members who are sick if feasible.

What do I do if I get the flu?

If you have symptoms of the swine flu, experts at Brenner Children's Hospital encourage you to stay home to prevent others from contracting the flu. Experts say you should remain home for 24 hours after your fever is gone. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and throw away any used tissues immediately. You should contact your pediatrician if your child runs a high fever for more than three days or if they have any of the symptoms noted in the next section. Additionally, if your child is under five years of age or has an underlying lung, heart, kidney, liver, blood or neurologic disease, they may be at high risk for a serious complications due to the flu and you should call your doctor when they first start developing respiratory symptoms with fever.

What are the symptoms of swine flu?

Swine flu symptoms include: fatigue, fever, body aches, runny or stuffy nose, cough, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea, according to the experts at Brenner Children's Hospital.

When should I seek emergency care?

If you or your child has any of the following signs or symptoms, please seek medical care immediately:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Has a bluish or gray skin color
- Displays flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worsening cough
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Decreased movement of your baby
- A high fever that does not respond to Tylenol (children should not be given products containing aspirin as this may predispose them to develop Reyes syndrome which causes problems in the liver and brain.)

When will the pandemic vaccine be available and who will be asked to get the vaccine first?

A vaccine for swine flu will begin to be available in October. The CDC recommends that the following groups be the first to receive the vaccine:

- Pregnant women
- Persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old (the vaccine does not work in children under 6 months of age and vaccinating others in the household helps protect those children.)
- People aged 25 through 64 who have chronic health problems or weak immune systems (examples of chronic health problems are asthma, diabetes, lupus and obesity)

Health care and emergency workers will also be in this first priority group since it's important to have as many of these professionals available to help take care of those who become ill. Check with your health care provider and watch for news reports to learn when the vaccine is available.

Is it Ok for me to feed my baby (breastfeed or formula feed) when I or my child is sick?

Infants are thought to be at higher risk for H1N1 so it is necessary to take precautions when feeding a child when you are sick. If possible, ask someone who isn't sick in the household to feed your baby. Mothers who are breastfeeding can express milk for this purpose. Wash your hands before and after feeding your child, and wash your child's hands as well. Do not cough or sneeze on your child while feeding him or her.

Breastfeeding mothers should not stop breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is one of the most important things you can do to help protect your child. Breastfeeding also helps a sick baby stay hydrated and protects his or her immune system.

Can I take medicine to prevent the spread of flu while breastfeeding? Can I take the flu shot?

It is OK for mothers who are breastfeeding to take medicines to prevent the flu. Mothers who are breastfeeding and women who are pregnant are STRONGLY encouraged to get BOTH the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines.

How do I help keep my children well?

Talking to your child and reminding them to wash their hands often is a big step in the right direction. Show children the proper way to clean their hands. Remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue and then throw that tissue away immediately. Also ask them to stay away from other sick people. Set a good example for them by washing your hands frequently (especially before eating). Avoid touching your eyes, mouth or nose. Have a back-up plan in place to care for your children if you or your spouse becomes sick.

For more information on H1N1 flu, visit wfubmc.edu for more information.