



Waukesha County Public Health Division

2009 H1N1 Flu - Caring for Ill People at Home

2009 H1N1 Flu

2009 H1N1 flu is a respiratory disease caused by a new virus. It spreads easily among humans, especially the young. Flu viruses spread through droplets that come from your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze. These tiny particles can be breathed in or can be transferred to others from hard surfaces when you touch them.

H1N1 flu virus infection can cause a wide range of symptoms

- Typically includes: Fever greater than 100° F and cough or sore throat
- May also include: Aches, chills, fatigue, runny nose and in some people, diarrhea and vomiting

H1N1 flu symptoms, like seasonal flu, can vary from mild to severe. Most people who are sick with H1N1 flu may be safely cared for at home. The following information can help you provide safer care at home.

Preparation

Learn as much as you can about H1N1 flu and know where to go for the most current information. Sources of accurate information include:

- Call 211/First Call For Help – a helpline with trained counselors to provide comprehensive information and referral support
- Websites:
 - www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - www.pandemic.wisconsin.gov – Wisconsin Department of Health Services – Pandemic Influenza Program
 - www.waukeshacounty.gov/pandemicflu - Waukesha County Public Health Division

Make a list of emergency health care contacts and keep it in a handy location. Have a list of basic health information for each family member including:

- Name, date of birth
- Allergies
- Chronic medical conditions
- Other special health care needs

Keep a two (2) week supply of non-perishable food and beverages on hand.

- Canned goods, dry cereals and crackers
- Bottled water, fruit juices
- Baby food and formula

Stock up on health and household supplies.

- Prescription medications and over-the-counter drugs
- Necessary medical supplies for chronic health conditions like diabetes
- Medicines for fever such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Thermometer to measure fever
- Fluids to reduce the risk of dehydration, e.g. sports drinks for adults and teens and Pedialyte® or other generic electrolyte solution for children.
- Cleaning supplies, tissues, toilet paper and disposable diapers

Establish a network of “flu friends” who can help if you are sick.

Caring for someone with flu

Someone who is sick with flu should get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids. Keep sick individuals away from others.

- If possible, set up a sick room and designate a separate bathroom for those with flu. The room should have windows that open to circulate fresh air and a door that closes. Keep the door closed as much as possible.
- Designate one (1) adult in the home to take care of a sick person. Avoid letting a pregnant woman care for a sick person, because pregnant women are at increased risk of severe flu and flu-related complications.
- Other than caregivers, the sick person should not have visitors.
- If possible, the sick person should wear a surgical or protective mask anytime a caregiver enters the room.

Relieving the Symptoms of Flu

Some people who have severe illness can benefit from antiviral drugs. Most people can get better with rest, fluids, and over-the-counter fever-reducing medicines.

- Check ingredient labels on over-the-counter cold and flu medications to see if they contain aspirin.
- Children 5 years of age and older and teenagers with the flu can take medicines *without* aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®), to relieve symptoms.
- Children younger than 4 years of age should **NOT** be given over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a health care provider.
- The safest care for flu symptoms in children younger than 2 years of age is using a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus.
- Fevers and aches can be treated with acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®) or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Examples of these kinds of medications include:

Generic Name	Brand Name(s)
Acetaminophen	Tylenol®
Ibuprofen	Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®
Naproxen	Aleve

- Over-the-counter cold and flu medications used according to the package instructions may help lessen some symptoms, such as cough and congestion. It is important to note that these medications will not lessen how infectious a person is.
- Check the ingredients on the package label to see if the medication already contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen before taking additional doses of these medications—don't double dose! Patients with kidney disease or stomach problems should check with their health care provider before taking any NSAIDs.
- Check with your health care provider or pharmacist if you are taking other over-the-counter or prescription medications not related to the flu.

Emergency medical care

Get medical care right away if you or a family member:

- Has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- Has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination or in infants lack of tears when they cry
- Has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions)
- Is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

Protecting yourself and others in the home

- Clean your hands frequently with soap and running water. Use an alcohol-based hand rub when soap and water are not available. Encourage everyone in the household to do the same. It is important to wash hands after coughing or sneezing, caring for a sick person, or after touching something a sick person has come in contact with.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or use individual cloth towels for each member of the household (for example, have a different colored cloth towel for each person).
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Cough into your sleeve if a tissue is not handy. Encourage everyone in the household to do the same.
- Throw away tissues and other disposable items used by the sick person in a trash container. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Keep surfaces clean with soap and water or other cleaning products. Clean frequently touched surfaces like bedside tables, countertops, bathroom fixtures and shared items like toys and TV remotes daily and when visibly soiled.
- Do not share linens, eating utensils and dishes.
 - Wash linens, such as sheets and towels with laundry soap and tumble dry on a hot setting.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub after handling dirty laundry.
 - Wash eating utensils and dishes in a dishwasher or by hand using hot water, soap and airing dry.