

Preparing for the Flu Season

What is seasonal flu?

Seasonal flu is caused by influenza (flu) viruses that have been interacting with humans for many years. Most of our immune systems have been exposed to influenza viruses at some time in our lives. Every year, these viruses change a little bit so a new seasonal flu vaccine is developed each year.

How is Novel H1N1 different than the seasonal flu?

Novel H1N1 is a novel virus, meaning humans, until recently, have never been infected with this virus. The virus changed in a way that enabled it to go from infecting only animals to infecting humans as well.

Novel viruses are dangerous because our immune systems have no previous experience battling them. Although the seasonal flu is most dangerous to those with weak immune systems, such as the very young and the elderly, the Novel H1N1 virus appears to be a threat to healthy, young adults.

Novel H1N1 viruses are not spread by food. You can not get infected with Novel H1N1 virus from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.



What are the symptoms of Novel H1N1?

The symptoms of Novel H1N1 flu are very similar to seasonal flu. They include:

Fever 100°F or higher
Head and body aches

Cough
Sore throat
Chills

Trouble breathing
Vomiting and/or diarrhea

Who is at risk for seasonal and Novel H1N1 flu?

The rules for who is at high risk for seasonal flu complications do not seem to apply to Novel H1N1 flu at the moment. The Novel H1N1 virus affects young people, pregnant women, people who are obese, and those with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, kidney or heart disease, or asthma.

What can I do to prevent getting sick?

- Wash your hands with soap and hot water to get rid of germs and to prevent the spread of disease. If you do not have soap and water, use a waterless hand gel with an alcohol base of at least 60%.
- Avoid kissing or shaking hands with people, and do not share food, drinks or utensils.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Get the seasonal flu vaccine, and if you are in a risk group for Novel H1N1, get that vaccine when it becomes available.

