

# SEASONAL FLU AND H1N1 (SWINE) FLU INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Influenza or the “flu” is caused by a virus. Each winter “seasonal” flu virus makes many children and adults sick. A new flu virus called H1N1, or swine flu, is currently making people sick. Children and young adults have never been exposed to this virus before, which is why it spreads so easily. The symptoms of seasonal flu and H1N1 flu are very similar. We expect many children and adults to get sick with seasonal or H1N1 flu this year.

Fortunately, most children and adults who get sick with seasonal flu or H1N1 flu do not get seriously ill and get better with home treatment. However, some children can develop serious illness or complications that need immediate attention. Below are tips to take care of your family this flu season.

## Preventing the flu:

The best way to keep from getting sick from any kind of flu is to practice good hygiene:

- Avoid people who are sick.
- Wash hands frequently and properly. Use hot water and soap or waterless hand gels that contain alcohol.
  - If you are using hot water and soap, rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Tell your kids to sing Happy Birthday and wash their hands the entire time.
  - If you or your child is using hand gel, rub your hands together until the gel is gone.
  - Be careful to not let your children ingest the waterless hand gel.
- At home, keep surfaces clean, like table tops, door knobs, and phones.
- Use cleaners that have chlorine or ammonia in them.
- To avoid flu illness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children older than 6 months get vaccinated for both seasonal and H1N1 flu. These are two separate vaccines.

## If your child gets sick – What to expect:

The flu makes most people feel sick all over. Common flu symptoms are fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, dizziness, chills, and fatigue. Some also might have vomiting and diarrhea. Many people who get the flu can feel sick for five to seven days. Most children (and adults) get better with home treatment; they do not need to see the doctor or take special medicines.

## If your child gets sick, follow these tips:

- Keep your sick child home from school and other activities.
- It's not easy, but try to keep your sick child away from siblings and others in your family so the illness does not spread.
- Keep hands and surfaces clean.
- Keep coughs and sneezes covered.
- Teach children to use tissues for sneezing and coughing.
- If a tissue isn't available, teach them to sneeze or cough into their elbow, to keep germs off hands.

## If your child gets sick – How to care for your child at home:

Most people get better with home treatment; they do not need to see the doctor or take special medicines. Here are some guidelines to help your child get better at home:

- Make sure your child gets more rest than usual.

- Make sure your children get lots of liquids:
  - **Infants** (less than 12 months) should drink Pedialyte®, formula, breast milk, or juice.
  - **Children** (older than 1 year) should drink Pedialyte®, juice, or water.
- Keep track of your child's temperature. It's a good idea to write down the time and temperature each time you take it.
- You can give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) for fever or pain.
- Do **not** give your child aspirin or aspirin products (such as Pepto-Bismol® or Alka Seltzer®). Giving aspirin to a child with flu virus can cause serious side effects. Check product ingredients for aspirin if you are unsure.
- If your child has flu-like symptoms and is already taking aspirin for another condition or illness, call your child's doctor.
- Continue any other prescription medications as instructed.

## If your child gets sick – When to call your doctor:

Certain children may have a greater risk of serious flu illness.

Call your doctor or health center if your child gets flu symptoms and:

- Is younger than 2 years
- Is pregnant
- Has another condition, including:
  - Asthma or other lung and breathing conditions, including cystic fibrosis; cancer; diabetes; genetic metabolic disorders; heart disease/ weakness; HIV/AIDS; immune system weakened from disease or treatment for other conditions like cancer; kidney disease; neurological conditions; neuromuscular disorders; or sickle cell disease.
- If your child has any of the conditions listed above and anyone else in your home is sick with the flu.

## If your child gets sick – When to seek immediate care at the closest hospital emergency department:

Seek immediate care for your child for any of the following symptoms:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing;
- Bluish skin color;
- Dehydration (not drinking or not keeping fluids in);
- Difficulty waking up or interacting;
- Extreme irritability, including not wanting to be held;
- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough; and/or
- Fever with a rash.

If your child's symptoms worsen and your child has any of the severe symptoms listed above, seek care at the closest hospital emergency department.

## Returning to normal activities:

Your child can return to school and other activities when:

- He or she is feeling better AND
- His or her fever has been gone for 24 hours, without the use of acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®).

*The health information presented in this fact sheet is intended for information purposes only and is not a substitute for consultation with a medical professional. If you have questions or concerns, please ask a trained healthcare provider.  
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*The nation's children's hospital*

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