

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA H1N1 HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

BACKGROUND

As you are aware the World Health Organization declared the H1N1 2009 (aka Swine Flu) a Pandemic in June 2009. We cannot predict how severe this particular pandemic will be, but being prepared may help lower the impact of the flu on you and your family.

Pandemic flu spreads rapidly and is seen worldwide. Pandemic flu infects large numbers of all ages and could cause serious illness and deaths. A pandemic usually come in waves. Each wave could last about 8-12 weeks, and the period between waves could vary from 8-20 weeks. Most likely, a pandemic has at least three waves and can last for over 12 months.

Symptoms

The symptoms caused by Pandemic Influenza are the same as seasonal flu.

- Fever >100 F.
- Body aches
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Sore Throat
- Runny or Stuffy nose
- Stomach or intestinal symptoms, (e.g. nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and etc.)

When should you call an ambulance or get emergency room care for a sick adult?

A sick adult may need medical help right away if he or she:

- Has bluish skin or lip color (for fair tones) and grayish skin or lip color (for darker tones).
- Has sudden dizziness or confusion.
- Is not drinking enough fluids.
- Is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down.
- Is not waking up or not interacting normally.
- Has flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.
- Has a fever with a rash.
- Is unable to urinate for a long period of time.
- Has seizures.
- Has difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Has pain or pressure in the chest or belly.

When should I call an ambulance or get emergency room care for a sick child?

A sick child may need medical help right away if she/he has any of the signs above or:

- Is being so irritable that he or she does not want to be held.
- Is not able to urinate, or in infants, has a lack of tears when they cry.
- Is less alert than normal or becomes confused.

TREATMENT FOR PANDEMIC FLU

How can I best take care of someone who may have H1N1?

The best thing to do is to take care of them at home. Ask sick family members to:

- Avoid close contact with family members who are healthy.
- Stay in their room while they are sick and stay away from other family members until at least 24 hours after fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a fever-lowering medicine.
- Stay at home while sick even if the sick person is using antiviral drugs.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink plenty of clear fluids (such as water, broth, and sports drinks).
- Wash their hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. Alcohol-based gels like Purell also work and are good to use if soap and water are not available.
- Cover their mouths and nose with a tissue or the inside of their elbow when they cough or sneeze. Make sure to put used tissue in the trash after one use.
- Check with their doctor about special care they might need. This is especially true if they are pregnant or have diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema.
- Check with their doctor about whether they or other family members should take antiviral medicine.
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs.

How can I prevent other family members from getting sick?

- Have only one adult in the home take care of the sick person.
- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house. (For example, a spare bedroom with its own bathroom)
- Keep the sickroom door closed.
- You may want the sick person to wear a surgical mask if they need to be in a common area of the house near other people.
- Have the sick person use a separate bathroom. This bathroom should be cleaned daily with household cleaners.
- Have everyone in the household wash their hands often. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based gel like Purell. Make sure to wash hands after every contact with the sick person or going into the sick person's room or bathroom.
- Use paper towels for drying hands after hand washing or use one cloth towel for each person in the household. For example, use different colored towels for each person.
- Watch family members for symptoms and contact your doctor if symptoms occur.

Antiviral Drugs

A number of antiviral drugs are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat and prevent seasonal influenza. Some of these antiviral medications may be effective in treating H1N1. These drugs may help prevent infection in people at risk and shorten the duration of symptoms in those infected with pandemic influenza. Antiviral therapy is most effective if started within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms. Talk to your doctor whether antivirals make sense for you or a family member.

Vaccine

The vaccine used against seasonal flu will not protect against H1N1, however it is still strongly recommended that you and your family receive the seasonal flu shot. Check with your doctor or local grocery, pharmacy, or retail store to see if they have a supply of seasonal flu vaccine available. There is a national distribution problem right now so the supply of seasonal flu vaccine is limited. The Howard County Health Department will announce additional seasonal flu clinics when vaccine becomes available.

Scientists have developed an H1N1 vaccine that is likely to provide protection. There have been several groups that have been given priority status for the vaccine. They include: pregnant women; household and caregiver contacts of children younger than 6 months of age; healthcare and emergency medical services personnel; infants, children and young adults from 6 months through 24 years of age; and persons 25 through 64 years who have high risk medical conditions.

Initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities. Check in with your doctor to see if he/she will be giving H1N1 shots or FluMist. One shot or FluMist will provide adults with the protection they need. Two doses of the vaccine are recommended for children under 10 though one dose will provide some protection.

PROTECTION

Protect yourself and your family!

1. Cover your cough and sneeze
 - If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
2. Wash your hands
 - Wash hands with warm soapy water for at least 10-15 seconds OR use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
3. Keep work areas clean
 - Sanitize surfaces with bleach or alcohol.
4. Keep your distance
 - Avoid crowds.
 - Try and remember, stay six feet away from someone exhibiting symptoms.
 - If you can't follow the 6-foot distance for a person exhibiting symptoms:
 - Give the symptomatic person a surgical mask to wear unless the patient is in respiratory distress
 - Wear a fitted N95 mask (within 6 feet)
 - Eye Protection (within 6 feet)
 - Gloves (any physical contact)
 - Alcohol-based gel (personal, in vehicles, and station)
 - If you are exhibiting flu symptoms you should stay home until you are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

ADDITIONAL PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. Having accurate and reliable information will be critical. Below are some of the websites that have the most up to date information concerning the H1N1 flu.

- Howard County Health Department – www.hchealth.org
- www.pandemicflu.gov
- <http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/> or 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636). This line is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Links are available to each State Department of Public Health at: www.pandemicflu.gov