

Boost Your Flu IQ

By Lori Russell

The 2009 H1N1 influenza—also known as the swine flu—is caused by a new strain of influenza virus. Like other viruses, it spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing and touching items contaminated with the virus.

The first step in preventing the spread of the flu is frequent hand washing. Soap and water are best, but if they are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. If you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth with the crook of your elbow or with your sleeve rather than your hand.

Talk to your health care provider about getting a seasonal and H1N1 flu shot or mist. If you do develop flu symptoms, stay home to prevent spreading your condition to others.

Signs of the H1N1 flu include fatigue, fever, sore throat, muscle aches, chills, coughing and sneezing. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting.

Be Prepared

Don't let the flu catch you unprepared. Keep these supplies on hand in case you need to stay home due to illness:

- ▶ Two-week supply of prescription medications
- ▶ Soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- ▶ Digital thermometer
- ▶ Anti-diarrheal and fever-reducing medications
- ▶ Over-the-counter cough syrup, decongestant
- ▶ Water and fruit juices
- ▶ Easily digested foods like clear broth, chicken noodle soup, applesauce and crackers
- ▶ Nonperishable foods like cereal, cereal bars, dried fruits, etc.
- ▶ Tissues, toilet paper, etc.



Lucy Booth receives H1N1 vaccination by nasal mist at a community vaccination event in The Dalles.

If You Develop Flu Symptoms

- Stay at home until the fever has been below 100 F without fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours. If you must go out, wear a surgical mask or stay at least 6 feet from other people.

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink at least 2 quarts per day of liquids (caffeine-free, nondiet soda pop, ginger ale, broth or tea with sugar). Avoid alcoholic beverages.

- Try an over-the-counter medication, such as a decongestant or decongestant nose drops, for a runny or stuffy nose, and cough syrup to control a cough. To reduce fever, take ibuprofen or acetaminophen, as directed. Avoid aspirin. If you are unsure what medication to take, consult your pharmacist or care provider.

- For vomiting, do not eat or drink anything until you have not vomited for four hours, then sip liquids for 24 hours. If no further vomiting, begin eating mild foods like crackers, toast, mashed potatoes, rice or applesauce for 24 hours, then resume your regular diet.

When to Seek Medical Care

Seek medical attention right away if any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever more than 102 F that does

not come down below 100 F with fever-reducing medicine.

- Severe headache.
- Rash.
- Stiff neck—unable to touch your chin to your chest.
- Severe cough not helped by cough medicine.
- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath.
- Pain/pressure in the chest/abdomen.
- Sudden dizziness or confusion.
- Vomiting that prevents keeping down liquids.

- Flu-like symptoms improve, but then return with fever and worse cough.

People with chronic or high-risk medical conditions should seek immediate medical care if they have ANY symptoms of the flu. Chronic conditions include lung (including asthma), heart, kidney, liver or blood disorders, metabolic disorders (including diabetes) and impaired immune systems (including those caused by medications or HIV/AIDS). ■

Questions? Visit www.flu.oregon.gov or call Oregon's H1N1 hotline at (800) 978-3040. Contact your health care provider or the North Central Public Health District at (541) 506-2600 for H1N1 flu vaccine availability. Para esta información en español, llame al (541) 506-2600. Source: North Central Public Health District.