



Welcome



Baby



utah county health department
"creating healthy communities"



United Way of Utah County

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A Parent's Guide to H1N1 Influenza

With all the headlines about the global H1N1 influenza (swine flu) pandemic, you might be worried about keeping your family safe. But the truth is, there's no reason to panic. Right now, there's no evidence that H1N1 flu is any worse — or more dangerous — than the common seasonal flu.

Still, it's important to take precautions, like washing your hands often. Read on to see what you can do to protect your family and care for kids with flu-like symptoms.

How Can My Family Avoid Catching the H1N1 Flu?

Your family can avoid catching the flu by getting vaccinated against the H1N1 flu when it becomes available and following these precautionary guidelines:

- Cover noses and mouths with a tissue when sneezing or coughing and put the used tissues in the trash.
- Cough or sneeze into an upper sleeve (not into hands) if a tissue is not available.
- Clean hands after coughing or sneezing — wash with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Do My Kids Need to Get Vaccinated?

Yes. Since kids are at higher risk of catching the H1N1 flu and having complications from it, they should receive the H1N1 flu vaccine. Children ages 9 and younger will need two doses of the vaccine (either through a nasal mist or shot) given 1 month apart. Older kids and teens need only one dose.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the H1N1 vaccine for the following groups:

- pregnant women
- people who live with (or care for) children younger than 6 months old
- kids and young adults between the ages of 6 months

and 24 years old

- people ages 25 to 64 with chronic health conditions or compromised immune systems
- health care and emergency services personnel

The H1N1 vaccine does **not** protect against seasonal flu, so it's important that kids also get the seasonal flu vaccine.

Is the Vaccine Safe?

The H1N1 vaccine is still being tested in clinical trials, so at this point, we don't have conclusive evidence about any potential risks of getting the vaccine. However, scientists expect it will be similar to the seasonal flu vaccine, which is recommended for kids and pregnant women and considered safe.

While very few people get side effects from the seasonal flu vaccine, those who do may have soreness or swelling at the site of the injection or mild side effects, such as headache or low-grade fever. Some people who get the nasal spray vaccine also may develop mild flu-like symptoms, including runny nose, headache, vomiting, muscle aches, and fever.

Although these side effects might last for a day, the H1N1 flu can potentially sicken someone for up to 3 weeks, and can cause life-threatening complications in very young children or people with chronic diseases. As a result, doctors believe that the benefits of getting the H1N1 vaccine outweigh any potential risks.

When and Where Is the Vaccine Available?

The H1N1 vaccine should be available in October. It will be given in places where the seasonal flu vaccine is available, like hospitals, clinics, community centers, pharmacies, doctor's offices, and schools. Many kids will receive the H1N1 vaccine at school.

Pregnant women, kids age 5 or younger, and children with chronic medical conditions should receive the vaccine as soon as it becomes available. People in these groups will be given preferential treatment when getting the vaccine or in times of limited vaccine supply.

What Are the Symptoms of H1N1 Flu?

Symptoms of the H1N1 flu are similar to the seasonal flu. They include fever (100° F or 37.8° C or above) plus one or more of the following: cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, diarrhea, or vomiting. The flu also can cause pneumonia, which can make it hard to breathe. The H1N1 flu can last anywhere from 7 to 14 days.

Kids who develop any of these symptoms need **immediate** medical attention:

- fast breathing or trouble breathing
- bluish skin color
- very sleepy or lethargic
- in babies, being so irritable they don't want to be held
- fever with a rash

- flu-like symptoms that improve, then return with fever and a worse cough

What if My Child Has Flu-like Symptoms?

If your child begins to have flu-like symptoms, **do not send your child to school or childcare**. This will help limit the spread of the virus. Keep your child home, and call the doctor to see whether an office visit is recommended. Only have your child leave the house for medical care.

Kids without chronic health conditions usually tolerate infection with the H1N1 virus fairly well and get better on their own without medical treatment. Others with severe symptoms of flu who need to be hospitalized or who are at risk for complications from the flu might be given antiviral medicines to ease symptoms, shorten the duration of the illness, and prevent complications.

At home, make sure your child:

- drinks lots of fluids to prevent dehydration
- gets plenty of sleep and takes it easy
- takes acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve fever and aches (but do **not** give aspirin due to the risk of Reye syndrome)
- wears layers, since the flu often makes kids cold one minute and hot the next
- does not return to school or childcare until fever (of 100° F or 37.8° C or above) is reduced for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines

Call your doctor if your child seems to get better but then feels worse, develops a high fever, has any trouble breathing, or seems confused.

If your child has a chronic condition, like asthma, make sure to check with your doctor to help ensure the condition is under control. Likewise, if you're pregnant or breastfeeding and come down with flu symptoms or have been exposed to someone who has the flu, contact your doctor right away. You may need to take antiviral medications as a precaution for yourself and your baby.

How Do I Keep My Child From Infecting Others?

Since the H1N1 flu spreads in the same way that other viruses do — through the air when a person who has the virus sneezes, coughs, or speaks, or when someone touches a contaminated surface and touches the nose, mouth, or eyes — it's important to have kids follow the precautions mentioned earlier.

A person infected with H1N1 can spread the virus to others the day before symptoms start and up to 5 to 7 days after they begin. Some people may be contagious for longer, especially if they have chronic health conditions that weaken their immune systems.

Once flu-like symptoms start, **do not** send your child to school or childcare. Your child should only leave the house for medical care or other necessities. Call your doctor before bringing your child in. At the doctor's office, make sure your child coughs or sneezes into a tissue or, if available and tolerable, have him or her wear a facemask to protect against other germs and viruses and to protect others.

At home, keep visitors from coming over, and make sure your child limits contact with family members. If possible, have only one adult care for the sick child. Siblings, pregnant women, and others who are at risk for flu complications should avoid getting closer than 6 feet to an infected person and should **never** get face-to-face, share cups or utensils, or handle dirty tissues (or other objects that may have been sneezed or coughed on). Make sure that hand sanitizer or soap and water is readily available for frequent hand washing and keep surfaces clean with disinfectant.

Kids can go back to school or childcare once their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines. Some might need to stay home longer, depending on how they feel. If you have questions or concerns, check with your doctor.

What Should I Say To Kids About H1N1 Flu?

Listening to news reports about H1N1 flu can upset kids because they may focus on worst-case scenarios. You can help ease their fears by being open, honest, and available to answer their questions.

Tell kids that there's no need to panic about H1N1 flu. Most people with the virus recover within a week. The media and governments are on high alert to help limit the spread of the disease and help people who may become ill. The last flu pandemic that was serious enough to affect millions of people happened a century ago — before people had access to the medical knowledge, care, and medications that we have today.

Taken in part from:

Gavin, Mary L., Oct. 2009. *A Parent's Guide to H1N1 Influenza*. Retrieved on November 30, 2009, from http://kidshealth.org/parent/h1n1_center/h1n1_center_about/h1n1_guide.html#.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

• **Ready to Learn**—Jan 20th at the Utah County Health Dept (UCHD), Rm. 1601 from 12-1 p.m. Bring your children and learn about the fun ways you can make reading, math, and science enjoyable for your young ones. Receive a complimentary book, & remember to RSVP at 422-1807.

• **Car Seat Safety Class**—(English) Jan 6th, 10a.m. and Jan 14th at 4:30am. (Spanish) Jan 13th, 2pm. All classes at UCHD, Rm. #2601.

• **Explore the Born Learning Trail**- there are seven throughout Utah County . For location of Born Learning Trails see www.unitedwayuc.org/welcomebaby

• **Provo City Library**— “**Book Babies**” Friday from 10-10:30 a.m. for infants 0-12 mos. “**Mother Goose Time**” every Friday from 11 -12pm for 1 year olds. Age appropriate songs, stories, and activities for baby and their parents/caregivers.

• **Orem City Library**— “**Laptime**” T, W, Th at 10am in Hogwarts' Corner; 20 min; for babies & toddlers; includes songs, fingerplays & short stories. “**Storytime**” T, W, Th at 10:30am in the Storytelling Wing.; 30 min; for preschoolers & young school age children; includes stories, puppets & activities .