What you should know about *Influenza (the Flu)*

Important information you need to know about the flu.

A new strain (Novel H1N1) of flu has developed and is impacting hundreds of thousands of people throughout the world. Our bodies have no natural immunity to this new virus. Therefore, transmission can spread easily from person to person. *To date, two-thirds of the influenza in the Northern Hemisphere is currently the Novel H1N1 virus.*

Here are some facts and resources to help you understand:

- **differences between the Novel H1N1 (Swine) flu and seasonal flu;**
- **availability and distribution of vaccines;**
- **signs, symptoms and what to do if you think you're sick**

What about vaccines?

Vaccines are still one of the best tools that we have to prevent influenza. **At risk groups should still receive the seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available, however,** the seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the Novel H1N1 flu.

A new vaccine has been developed to protect against the Novel H1N1 virus and is currently under clinical trials. The vaccine is expected to be available by mid-October. The distribution channels will be limited and only certain segments of the population will be eligible to receive the Novel H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. (These key populations are listed on the reverse page.)

<u>Seasonal flu & vaccination</u>

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) hopes that people will start to go out and get vaccinated now against seasonal influenza at their doctors' offices and in their communities.

The seasonal flu vaccine is readily available and administered in two different forms:

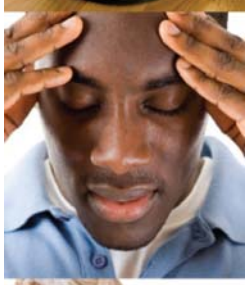
As one (1) shot - (available to all ages)

Flu Mist inhalation - (mist not used for children under 6 months of age due to health risks).

These groups (in order) are most at risk for seasonal flu:

- adults ages 65 and older
- children
- adults with certain chronic illnesses
- general population

It's very important for individuals in the categories listed above to receive the seasonal flu vaccine for protection against seasonal flu.



<u>Novel H1N1 flu & vaccination</u>

- **The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the use of one dose of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine for persons 10 years of age and older.**
- It is likely that children younger than 10 years will need two doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. Infants younger than 6 months of age are too young to get the 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines.
- Novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be administered by selected vaccination agencies in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Novel H1N1 vaccine will not be available in most primary care settings. Therefore, at risk individuals should take advantage of publicized community resources to receive the vaccine. We anticipate using multiple distribution channels including mass immunization clinics at schools and other public sites.

Take everyday actions to stay healthy.

Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.

- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- **Wash your hands often** with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs spread that way.
- **Stay home if you get sick.** CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. People with flu symptoms should remain at home until they have a normal temperature while not taking acetaminophen or other fever reducing meds for 24 hours. They can then safely return to work even if they are completing antiviral therapy.

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Because the vaccine will initially be available in limited quantities, people within the groups at extreme risk for Novel H1N1 influenza listed below have been prioritized for receiving the vaccine:

- **Pregnant women** because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;
- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months;**
- **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel with patient contact;**
- **All people from 6 months through 24 years of age.** Children from 6 months through 18 years of age are in close contact with each other in school and daycare settings, which increase the likelihood of disease spread. Young adults 19 through 24 years of age often live, work, and study in close proximity;
- **Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.**

How does novel H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of novel H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with novel H1N1 flu, should I go to work?

Employees who are well but who have an ill family member at home with novel H1N1 flu can go to work as usual. These employees should monitor their health every day, and take everyday precautions including washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. If they become ill, they should notify their supervisor and stay home.

Why is novel H1N1 virus sometimes called "swine flu"?

This virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. You cannot get infected with novel HIN1 virus from eating pork or pork products.

Be prepared

In case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so, a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues and other related items could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.

SOURCES: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, WellSpan Health

Important to note:

- Individuals may be able to infect others 1 day before getting symptoms and as long as 5 days after getting sick.
- **Surfaces can contain active, transmittable flu virus for up to two hours or longer after being touched by an infected person. Use caution and disinfect doorknobs, switches, handles, computers, telephones, toys and other surfaces that are commonly touched around the home or workplace.**

Signs & Symptoms – What to do if you get sick

Influenza-like symptoms include fever (100.5˚ F or greater), body aches, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea.

If you experience these symptoms, you should stay home and avoid contact with other people for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)

Avoid normal activities, including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings. Contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and a worse cough