

Questions and Answers about Seasonal Flu & H1N1 Flu

How is the flu spread?

- Seasonal flu and H1N1 are spread the same way – through coughing or sneezing.
- Coughing and sneezing can infect other people or can be on surfaces that your hands touch, such as doorknobs. If your hands touch these surfaces and you rub your eyes or nose, the flu virus can enter your body.

How can I prevent the spread of seasonal flu and H1N1?

- Get the seasonal flu vaccination (shot) now and H1N1 vaccination when available to protect you and those around you.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after sneezing or coughing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners (Purell) also works well.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your arm at the elbow – not into your hand.

What are the symptoms of H1N1?

- Symptoms of H1N1 are similar to seasonal flu:
 - Fever – temperature greater than 100° F (37.8°C)
 - Cough
 - Sore throat
 - Stuffy nose
 - General aches & pains, including headache; or
 - Chills and/or fatigue
 - Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea

When should I see my doctor?

- If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

Who will get tested for H1N1?

- Saint Joseph Mercy Health System follows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) criteria to test patients for H1N1. **Not everyone with flu symptoms will be tested for H1N1. The CDC recommends testing in those who are so sick they need to be hospitalized.**

(turn page for more information)

Questions and Answers about**Seasonal Flu & H1N1 Flu - continued****What should I do if I get sick?**

- If you live in an area where people have seasonal flu or H1N1 flu and you become sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home and avoid contact with other people.
- Stay home until you are symptom-free without using fever-lowering medicine (like Tylenol) for 24 hours.

Do I need antiviral medication if I think I have H1N1 or other types of flu?

- Saint Joseph Mercy Health System follows the CDC guidelines for prescribing antiviral medication.
- Antivirals are only recommended for those with flu-like illness **AND** are at high risk for complications from the flu, like pregnant women and children under 2 years of age.
- Overuse of antivirals, like Tamiflu, will result in the flu becoming resistant to these medications.

Can I visit a friend or family member in the hospital?

- For the health of all patients, please do not visit patients in the hospital if you are not feeling well.
- If your visit is absolutely necessary, please wash your hands or use hand sanitizer and ask for a mask to wear during your visit.

How can I take care of myself or my child?

- Stay home until you are symptom-free without using fever-lowering medicine (like Tylenol) for 24 hours.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep hydrated.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your arm at the elbow.
- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaners.
- Avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school.
- Watch for warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need emergency medical care.

If I have flu-like symptoms and they get worse, what should I do?

- If you are sick and have any of these warning signs, call your doctor right away or seek emergency medical care.

Warning signs in adults:

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

Warning signs in children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Not drinking enough fluids
- 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
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Severe or persistent vomiting