

# Influenza and You

Influenza is a contagious respiratory illness caused by the influenza virus. **Seasonal influenza** occurs each year during “flu season.” **H1N1 novel influenza** is a new flu virus that is not seasonal. Seasonal influenza and H1N1 are both flu viruses. They are similar but they have some differences as well.

Seasonal Influenza	H1N1 Novel Influenza
<p>Affects people usually from late fall to spring during flu season.</p> <p>Symptoms include: fever (over 100° F), headache, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches.</p> <p>Spreads from person to person through coughing and sneezing or touching surface or object and then touching mouth, nose or eye.</p> <p>Infected person may be infectious for 1 day before symptoms and 5-7 days after symptoms.</p> <p>High risk groups for contracting: children under age 5, pregnant women, people over 65, those of any age with chronic medical conditions.</p> <p>May be sick for 5-10 days.</p> <p>Vaccine available every fall from September through the spring of the following year.</p>	<p>Affects people at any time of the year.</p> <p>Symptoms include: fever (over 100° F), headache, tiredness, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, may include diarrhea and vomiting.</p> <p>Spreads from person to person through coughing and sneezing or touching surface or object and then touching mouth, nose or eye.</p> <p>Infected person may be infectious for 1 day before symptoms and 5-7 days after symptoms.</p> <p>High risk groups for contracting: children and young adults ages 0 to 24 years, pregnant women, those with chronic medical conditions (some are asthma, diabetes, suppressed immune system, heart disease, kidney disease, and neuromuscular disorders).</p> <p>May be sick for 5-10 days.</p> <p>Vaccine in development with possible release in October 2009. The vaccine will first be available to high risk groups and then expanded as the amount of vaccine increases.</p>

## Fight the Flu!

**Cover Your Cough** • **Wash Your Hands** • **Stay Home If You Are Sick**



*Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your sleeve.*

*Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.*

*Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.*

*Avoid close contact with people who are sick.*

*Stay healthy: eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep and exercise.*

*If sick, stay home until fever free for 24 hours without using fever reducing medications (Tylenol or Ibuprofen).*

*Get your seasonal flu shot yearly.*

## What if I or a Loved One Gets Sick?

- Stay home from work or school. This means not leaving home unless you need to seek medical care.
- Get lots of rest, drink plenty of liquids, and avoid using alcohol and tobacco.
- Use over-the-counter (OTC) medications to relieve the symptoms of the flu (but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms, particularly fever).
- Call your doctor to see if there is a need to be evaluated for treatment. Antivirals (prescribed medication) work best if started very early in the course of illness.
- You may be asked to wear a mask when you see the doctor if you are coughing.

Most healthy people recover from the flu without complications in about 5-7 days. If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed.

Seek emergency medical care if you or someone you know is having any of the following warning signs.

- In children:
- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
  - Bluish skin color
  - Not drinking enough fluids (dark colored urine or no tears when crying)
  - 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 cough worsens
  - Fever with a rash

- In adults:
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  - Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
  - Sudden dizziness
  - Confusion
  - Severe or persistent vomiting



## Cleaning

Flu viruses can live on objects and surfaces from 2 to 8 hours after being deposited. The flu virus can be killed by a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 10 parts water), detergents and soap, and alcohol based sanitizers if used properly. Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to label instructions. Eating utensils and dishes can be washed as normal. Linens and towels should be washed and dried on a hot setting. Avoid “hugging” dirty laundry and wash your hands with soap and water after handling dirty laundry.

## Are You Ready?

Update your personal preparedness plans and emergency kits to ensure that you are ready at home. Ask your employer and your child’s school what preparedness plans they have made for influenza absences. Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or contact Otter Tail County Public Health for preparedness planning information.

## More Information

- Local papers and radio stations will carry information about seasonal and H1N1 immunization clinics.
- Minnesota Department of Health [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us) 1-877-676-5414
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [www.cdc.gov/h1n1/](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1/) 1-800-CDC-INFO
- Otter Tail County Public Health [www.co.ottertail.mn.us](http://www.co.ottertail.mn.us) 1-218-998-8320



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Prevent. Promote. Protect.