

## Frequently Asked Seasonal and H1N1 Flu Questions

### What is influenza?

Influenza (or flu) is a respiratory disease caused by a virus. Influenza is a leading cause of illness in the United States. It can lead to serious medical complications, hospitalizations, or even death.

### What are the symptoms of the flu?

Flu is a respiratory disease. The symptoms of the flu are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills and fatigue
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (not typical in seasonal flu)



### How can I prevent getting the flu?

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each year. Other precautions one can take are:

- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people

### What is “seasonal flu” and how is it different than “H1N1 flu”?

Seasonal flu is a group of viruses established in the human population that change (mutate) year to year and causes human illness mostly in the winter season. Because they change, it is necessary to receive a seasonal flu vaccination every year. H1N1 flu is an influenza virus that has changed from an animal origin to a virus that now infects humans. It contains genetic information that most humans have never been exposed to; this creates the potential for an illness that spreads more rapidly and causes worse symptoms than seasonal flu.

### Who should get a seasonal flu vaccine?

CDC recommends that people who should get vaccinated each year are:

- Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu

**Where can I get seasonal flu vaccination?**

It is best to go to your health care provider to obtain flu vaccination. When Free and Low Cost Clinics are scheduled, dates and locations will be posted on our Butte County Public Health website at [www.buttecounty.net/publichealth](http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth) and on our Toll Free Information Line at 1-866-444-2405. You may also visit [www.findaflushot.com](http://www.findaflushot.com) for a listing of other clinics available in your area.

**When should I get a seasonal flu vaccine?**

The seasonal flu vaccine will be available in early fall. It is best to get this vaccine soon after it becomes available.

**Will the seasonal flu vaccine provide protection against the H1N1 flu?**

No. The influenza vaccine for this year's seasonal flu does not provide protection against the H1N1 virus. There will be separate vaccines for H1N1 flu and seasonal flu.

**Who should get the H1N1 flu vaccine?**

The CDC recommends that individuals who are at high risk receive the H1N1 vaccine first. The five initial high risk target groups for providing the H1N1 flu vaccine are:

- pregnant women
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- health care workers
- persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age
- people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

**When will the H1N1 flu vaccine be available?**

We expect vaccine to be available starting in mid October and continuing into the spring. Specific plans about distribution and provision of the H1N1 vaccine will be provided when this information is available.

**Where can I get the H1N1 flu vaccine?**

Vaccine is expected to be available in the fall. It is anticipated that vaccine will be available in a combination of settings such as vaccination clinics, healthcare provider offices, pharmacies and possibly other setting such as workplaces and schools. As soon as more information is available regarding how to get a flu vaccine this information will be provided on our Public Health Information Line at 1-866-444-2405 and on our website at [www.buttecounty.net/publichealth](http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth).

**Will the H1N1 vaccine make me sick?**

The reaction to the H1N1 flu vaccine is anticipated to be similar to the reactions seen with the seasonal flu vaccine. Usually, there is no noticeable reaction, but minor reactions such as soreness at the injection site are relatively common.

### **How do I prevent the spread of flu?**

- Minimize contact with others
- Always cover your cough
- Wash your hands frequently and do not shake hands with others while you are ill
- Stay home until you are free of symptoms for 24 hours



### **Do I need medications to recover from the flu?**

Some people take medication to lessen the symptoms of the flu, but most people do not need medications to recover from the flu. Comfort measures such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), decongestants, cough drops, tea and rest are safe and may help you feel better. Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers who have the flu as this can cause a rare but serious illness called Reyes syndrome.

Specific anti-viral medications may decrease the severity of the illness in some patients. The CDC is still defining who should receive these medicines but it is likely that individuals at higher risk of flu complications or those with severe flu illness that requires hospitalization will be given the highest priority. Check with your health care provider as the season progresses for current recommendations.

### **How do I know at what point I should seek medical care for the flu?**

Most people with the flu can stay at home and do not require professional care, but always contact your provider if you have any questions or concerns especially if you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications.

#### ***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 worse cough

### **Is H1N1 flu more dangerous than seasonal flu?**

It is still early in the study of H1N1 flu but it does appear that certain groups of people are more likely to become ill and for some groups to become seriously ill. But for most people, the H1N1 virus does not appear to be more severe than seasonal influenza. Individuals with underlying medical conditions should be particularly cautious with seasonal flu or H1N1 flu. Underlying medical conditions include chronic medical conditions, pregnancy, and obesity may increase the risk of serious illness.

### **What should I do if I'm caring for someone with the flu?**

It is best to prevent the spread of respiratory droplets and germs. This is best accomplished by:

- Keep the sick person in a room separate from the common areas of the house and encourage the sick person to always cover their coughs and sneezes
- Consider having the sick person wear a surgical mask if they have to be in a common area of the home around other family members
- As a caregiver avoid being face to face with the sick person
- Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer each time you enter and leave the sick room
- Clean surfaces with disinfectant
- Do not share towels or eating utensils

### **How will I know if I have H1N1?**

The confirmation of H1N1 is based on laboratory testing. Most persons who have flu symptoms will not be tested for H1N1. Most individuals who are sick with influenza like illness will be asked to stay home, take care of themselves, and recover. A limited number of people with severe illness will be tested for confirmation of H1N1 or another influenza type illness.

### **For More Information**

## **BUTTE COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

### **Website:**

[www.buttecounty.net/publichealth](http://www.buttecounty.net/publichealth)

### **Information Line:**

1-866-444-2405

### **Public Health:**

Chico 891-2732

Oroville 538-7581

*Further information is also available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) website at [www.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.cdph.ca.gov).*

