

FactSheet

Para Su Información

When to Seek Medical Care for Influenza

What is influenza?

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. Seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 are both influenza viruses that can cause mild to severe illness. Influenza usually comes on suddenly and symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, extreme tiredness, runny or stuffy nose and muscle aches. Stomach symptoms may include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, but are more common in children than adults.

Does everyone with the flu need to see a health care provider or get tested and treated?

Most children and adults who are generally in good health will recover from the flu without needing to visit a health care provider. Some people may want to call their health care provider for advice on how to care for the flu at home.

I think I have the flu. Can I get tested and treated for 2009 H1N1 influenza or seasonal flu?

Testing and treatment is not needed or recommended for most children and adults who get the flu. Antiviral medication is not currently recommended except for people with the flu who are at higher risk for complications or have severe illness.

Who needs to call or visit a health care provider?

Children and adults who are ill and at high risk for flu complications and people with more severe flu symptoms should call their primary health care provider or go to an urgent care clinic/emergency room if they cannot reach their health care provider.

Whenever possible, call your health care provider to get advice on whether you need to be seen. Do not go to an emergency room unless you have severe symptoms or a chronic condition that puts you at higher risk for flu complications and you cannot contact your health care provider.

General advice if you think you have the flu:

- If you are sick with the flu, you may be ill for a week or longer. Stay home, unless you need medical care or other necessities, so you can get better and prevent others from getting ill. Drink plenty of fluids and rest as much as possible. Avoid travel.
- Do not go to work or school until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone. Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine like acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil).
- If you leave the house to seek medical care, wear a facemask.
- Wash your hands frequently with warm water and soap or use a hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- In general, avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially those with one of the high-risk chronic conditions.

Who is at increased risk for seasonal flu complications?

Generally, people at increased risk for flu complications are:

- Children younger than 5 years of age, particularly children younger than 2 years of age,

(continued)

for whom the risk for severe complications from influenza is highest

- Adults 65 years of age or older
- Pregnant women
- People with the following conditions:
 - Chronic diseases of the lung (including asthma), heart (except hypertension), kidney, liver, blood (including sickle cell disease), brain or nervous system, muscles (particularly those that cause difficulty with swallowing), or metabolism (including diabetes mellitus)
 - Immunosuppression (weakened immune system) including that caused by medications or by HIV
 - People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy, because of an increased risk for Reye syndrome

Who is at risk for complications from 2009 H1N1 flu?

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age because this age group is at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel who have direct patient contact
- Children 6 months through 18 years of age because they are typically in close contact with each other in school and child care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread
- Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because they often live, work and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population
- Adults 25 through 64 years of age who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

When should I seek immediate medical care?

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, go to an emergency room or urgent care center.

For children:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color (call 911 immediately)
- 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

For adults:

- 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

Where can I get more information?

Contact your health care provider or go to the Southern Nevada Health District's website at www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org.



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