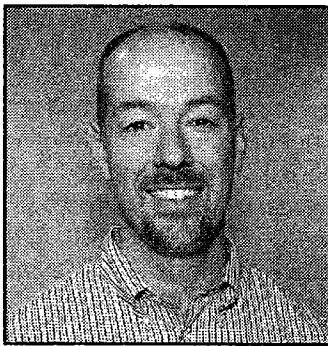


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H1N1 flu: What you need to know

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In light of recent events, we'd like to remind the public of the facts regarding H1N1 influenza.

What seems to concern us about H1N1, also known as the "swine flu," is that it is new. Like many things in life, we tend to fear the unknown. It makes us uncomfortable.

So, here is what you should know about H1N1.

First, it is no more dangerous than the regular or seasonal flu.

Second, since H1N1 is a new virus, most of us have no immunity to it, which means many more people will get sick from it.

The vast majority of people who get infected will have mild cases that will go away over a few days and will not require special treatment or medical attention.

Third, the younger population will be more likely to get sick than the elderly.

Why is that? The theory is that at some point in the past, the elderly were exposed to a virus similar enough to the current H1N1 virus that they have some level of immunity. In other words, they have been naturally vaccinated.

Think prevention when it comes to what you can do to protect yourself and your family from H1N1.

Get yourself and appropriate family members vaccinated. Wash your hands frequently. If someone in the family does get sick, put them in "quarantine," while checking on them frequently, so the rest of the

family does not get sick.

Don't go to work if you're sick or send your kids to school if they're ill. If you do have flu-like symptoms, you may return to work or school when you've been fever-free without the aid of fever medication for a period of 24 hours or more.

Remain calm and use good judgment. H1N1 is more of an annoyance than a real danger for the vast majority of us.

Also, be aware that according to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) guidelines for H1N1, generally healthy people with flu symptoms will not be tested or treated with drugs like Tamiflu in emergency departments or immediate care facilities.

But be vigilant. Know the signs that would indicate someone is becoming seriously ill, including poor ability to drink fluids, difficulty in breathing and a significant change in behavior.

Typical flu symptoms include fever, cough, congestion, sore throat, aches and pains and an increased need for rest. A person's behavior and demeanor should remain consistent with other times they have been ill. Contact your primary care physician if you feel your loved one is having more serious symptoms.

For more H1N1 information and answers to frequently asked questions, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or www.edward.org.