

# H1N1 (Swine Flu) and Children With Special Health Care Needs

Novel H1N1 flu is a new and very different influenza virus that is spreading worldwide and causing illness, hospital stays and deaths.

Symptoms of seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also may have vomiting and diarrhea. Young children are less likely to have typical influenza symptoms like a fever and a cough. Infants may have fever and extreme tiredness but may not have cough or other respiratory symptoms.

If you think your child has influenza, call your doctor. Antiviral medication, if taken soon after infection, can shorten the length of illness.

For relief of fever, use non-aspirin fever reducers like Tylenol®.

- Do not give aspirin or aspirin-containing products like Pepto-Bismol® to any child who has a confirmed or suspected case of influenza because of the risk of Reye's syndrome.
- Do not give over-the-counter cold medicine to children younger than 4 without first speaking with a health-care provider.



## Children With Developmental Disabilities and Chronic Medical Conditions

Children at higher risk for complications from influenza include:

- Children younger than 5 and especially those younger than 2.
- All children with:
  - Immune suppression.
  - Chronic kidney disease.
  - Heart disease.
  - HIV/AIDS.
  - Diabetes.
  - Asthma or other problems of the lungs.
  - Sickle cell disease.
  - Long-term aspirin therapy for chronic disorders.
  - Intellectual and developmental disability.
  - Cerebral palsy.
  - Spinal cord injuries.
  - Seizure disorders.
  - Metabolic conditions or other neuromuscular disorders

Families are encouraged to make sure their children's vaccinations are up to date. If your child requires medication (e.g., for asthma or HIV/AIDS), make sure he or she continues taking the medications.

# General Health Prevention

Take these everyday steps to prevent the spread of flu viruses:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Teach your children to take these actions, too.
- Keep children from having close contact (about 6 feet) with sick people, including family members.
- Keep surfaces (bedside tables, bathroom, kitchen counters and toys) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

## For More Information

Contact the North Dakota Department of Health at 800.472.2180 or visit [www.ndflu.com](http://www.ndflu.com).

Additional information can be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)

# School and Day Care

Recommendations for schools and day cares may continue to change so stay connected with local officials and your child's medical team during the flu season. Currently, schools and day cares are following these procedures:

- **Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick:**
  - o Those with flu-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs.
- **Separate ill students and staff:**
  - o Students and staff who have flu-like illness should stay in a room separate from others until they can be sent home.
  - o Families of children with special health care needs who receive routine medication within the school day are encouraged to learn where ill students will be isolated at their school. Children who are not ill should receive routine medication in an alternative setting to avoid being exposed.
- **Encourage hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:**
  - o Follow the basic foundations of influenza prevention: stay home when sick, wash hands frequently with soap and water, and cover noses and mouths when coughing or sneezing.

# Vaccination

A vaccine has been developed to prevent infection with the novel H1N1 influenza virus. It is recommended that all children, including healthy children and those with high-risk medical conditions/disabilities, should be vaccinated against H1N1 influenza. In addition, the following people should also get the seasonal influenza vaccine:

- All children ages 6 months through 18 years, including those who are healthy and those with conditions that increase the risk of complications from influenza.
- Household contacts and out-of-home care providers of children younger than 6 months.

**Check with your child's health-care provider or your local public health unit to see if vaccine is available.**