

Flu - KNOW WHAT TO DO

Updated September 16, 2009

The difference between seasonal flu and H1N1

Seasonal influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by [influenza viruses](#). It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The Novel H1N1 influenza is a new strain of the flu that most people don't have immunity to. The illness may be more severe and widespread as a result. Unlike regular flu, this flu seems to affect more young adults and children than the elderly. Pregnant women and people with underlying health conditions are also at greater risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is projecting that vaccinations for [high risk groups](#) will be available in October.

The symptoms of the seasonal flu and H1N1 are similar

Typical symptoms of both types of flu are fever above 100°F, cough, sore throat, and stuffy nose. In some cases people have also experienced diarrhea and vomiting, body aches and headaches. If you have these symptoms, you should restrict contact with others (stay home!) for at least 24 hours until you are free of fever, and contact your doctor.

Protecting employees and the public

The health of employees plays a critical role in the continued operations of any organization. Organizations should take steps to protect employees, clients or customers and other visitors from the spread of the flu and other communicable diseases. Organizations should develop plans and policies that address employee concerns about their health at work and the need to care for family members who become ill. Continuity of Operation plans can help identify critical functions that need to be maintained and where staff need cross-training.

Take steps to protect yourself and others

- **Get your seasonal flu shot.** Protect yourself and others from flu. Vaccine for the seasonal flu is available NOW – call your doctor or clinic, or check the Minnesota Department of Health ["Find a Flu Shot Clinic"](#) webpage to identify a clinic near you.
- **Watch for more information about H1N1 vaccine.** Check one of the resources listed below frequently for updated information about H1N1.
- **Inform family members and people you may serve about the importance of protecting themselves from flu.** Encourage anyone you come in contact with to get a flu shot.
- **If you are feeling sick and show signs of the flu, stay home.** Remain at home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever. If you become ill with influenza-like symptoms, you should call your health care provider to determine if you need to be evaluated.
- **If you become ill at work, please go home.** Let your supervisor know you are ill, and minimize contact with staff.
- **If a client appears to be ill, move them away from other people,** and if possible, expedite their visit so they can return home.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.** Use a tissue or, in the absence of a tissue, your sleeve.

- **Practice good hand hygiene.** Remember to wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing and before eating. Label pens and pencils with your name, and do not hand them to others. Use a disinfectant to wipe down items used by clients and visitors.
- **Clean surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact,** such as doorknobs, phones and workstations. Encourage building maintenance staff to increase attention to cleaning door knobs and handles, and be sure to have sufficient disinfectant supplies handy for staff.
- **Be prepared.** Develop a [family emergency plan](#). To eliminate the need to go out in public while you are sick and contagious, gather essential items ahead of time such as food, over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, surface disinfectants, a thermometer and tissues.
- **Prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or temporary closure of child care programs.** Children are at higher risk for becoming ill from the H1N1 virus.
- **Prepare for a possible increase in co-workers' absence.** Work with your manager to make sure you and your co-workers have completed cross-training to cover for one another. Organizations are urged to develop a continuity of operations plan that identifies and prioritizes critical functions that the organization should strive to maintain during severe staffing shortages or other emergencies.

Stay informed

Visit the following websites for updates about influenza and what you can do to stay healthy.

- [Dakota County Web site](http://www.DakotaCounty.us)
www.DakotaCounty.us
- [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us)
www.health.state.mn.us – or call the public information line: 651-201-5414
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](http://www.cdc.gov)
www.cdc.gov or www.flu.gov

Additional information for specific groups:

- [Businesses and Employers](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/)
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/
- [Homeless and Emergency Shelters](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homeless.htm)
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance/homeless.htm
- [Childcare and Early Childhood Programs](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/childcare/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/childcare/index.html
- [K-12 School Professionals](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/school/index.html
- [Colleges and Universities](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/colleges/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/colleges/index.html
- [Long-Term Care Facilities](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/ltc/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/ltc/index.html
- [Faith-Based Organizations](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/faith/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/faith/index.html
- [Food Service Operators](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/ehs/h1n1flu.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/ehs/h1n1flu.html
- [EMS, First Responders, Fire, and Law Enforcement](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/ps/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/ps/index.html
- [Health Professionals](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/hcp/index.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/hcp/index.html
- [Resources in Other Languages](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/languages.html)
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/flu/h1n1/languages.html

