



Seasonal and H1N1 (“swine flu”) Influenza

Dekalb Pediatric Center’s Guide to the Flu
Overview, Symptoms, When to be Concerned,
Home Care Advice, Vaccinations,
School Issues, and More

What is the flu?

- The flu (influenza) is a viral infection that spreads easily from person to person and causes symptoms that include **fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, chills, fatigue, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.**
- Every year in the United States different flu viruses circulate and cause illness, hospital stays and deaths. This is known as seasonal flu. A vaccine is available every year to help protect against getting seasonal flu.

What is novel H1N1, or “swine flu”?

- H₁N₁ is a new influenza virus strain that began spreading worldwide this spring. You can think of it as a cousin of seasonal flu – closely related, but different. Because it is new, most people do not have any immunity to it; therefore the prediction is that more people than during a regular flu season will get sick, more younger people will get sick, and perhaps there will be more serious illnesses.
- So far we have seen kids with uncomfortable symptoms, yet mild illness, much like we see during the regular flu season. Because it is early for seasonal flu we think most of what we are seeing now is H₁N₁ flu.

Can I tell if my child has H1N1?

- The diagnosis of influenza is a clinical diagnosis based on history and symptoms. Many other viruses besides influenza cause illness in children.
- The only test available to confirm a case of H1N1 is being done by the state lab on hospitalized children.
- There is no rapid test for swine flu, and the rapid test for Influenza A is highly inaccurate. That is why we have never offered it in the office, and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is not using it in the emergency room.
- If you hear that someone has a "confirmed" case of swine flu it would only be true if the test was done at the state laboratory. Those tests are only being done by public health officials or on hospitalized patients.

Who is at increased risk?

- Just like with seasonal flu very young children, children with chronic conditions such as asthma or other lung problems, diabetes, weakened immune systems, heart, kidney, and neurological problems are at higher risk for complications or more severe illness from the new H₁N₁ virus.

How does it spread?

How contagious is it?

- Both strains of flu spread from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick. Touching something with flu virus on it, then touching your mouth or nose will also spread the flu.
- People with the virus are contagious and can spread the virus from 1 day before symptoms begin until they feel better and have no fever for 24 hours (without any fever reducing medicine).

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

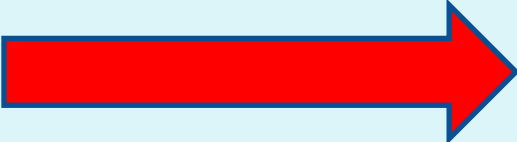
- If started in the first 24-48 hours antiviral drugs, such as Tamiflu, can treat seasonal and H1N1 flu by shortening the course of illness. Trials are being done to see if they also treat or prevent complications of the flu.
- The priority use for these drugs is for people, including children, who are seriously ill or who have a medical condition that puts them at high risk for complications of the flu.
- Tamiflu has side effects which include stomach ache, nausea, and the potential for psychiatric symptoms.
- For most people symptomatic care is all that is needed.
- We do not call in Tamiflu over the phone and are only prescribing it for our very sick high risk patients after an examination in the office.

“My child was sent home from school or daycare. My child has a fever. My child looks sick. I think he has the flu. I’m worried. What should I do?”

- The following is our triage protocol to help you decide if you need to:
 - Be seen immediately
 - Call us for an appointment
 - Call us for more advice
 - Need Home Care advice


Immediate life threatening emergency?

- Does your child have:
 - Poor responsiveness (limp, can't arouse, too weak to move)
 - Blue color to the nail beds, lips, or gums
 - Extremely labored breathing – can't talk and breathe, working very hard to breathe

If yes  call 911

Does your child have any of the following?

- Difficulty breathing (pulling in between the ribs, grunting, tight feeling or unable to take a deep breath)
- Your child is less than 12 weeks and has a fever
- Any signs of dehydration (very poor intake, dry mouth, no tears, decreased urine output)

If yes  call to be seen immediately in the office. After hours, or if not possible, you should go to the Emergency Room.

Does your child have any of the following?


- A chronic health problem such as asthma, other lung problems, diabetes, heart, kidney, neurological problems, or a weakened immune system along with acute flu symptoms like high fever and cough.
- Is under 1 year of age with a temperature > 103 degrees.

Continued



Does your child have any of the following?

- Chest pain, abdominal pain, breathing difficulty, persistent vomiting, extreme irritability
- Flu like symptoms that improved and now return with fever and worse cough

If yes  call to be seen as soon as possible. Call back if condition worsens before your appointment. Your child may need to be seen after hours.

Does your child have any of the following?

- Fever lasting more than 4-5 days
- Very weak and tired after 5 days
- New symptoms that started after the first few days of flu symptoms
- Improvement for a day or two, then recurrence of symptoms

Continued 

Does your child have any of the following?

- Dizziness, feeling faint, or passes out
- Acting confused or less responsive
- You have concerns about how your child looks or feels

If yes  call our office for more advice, or make an appointment.

Checklist for who can be managed at home with symptomatic care.

(usually no phone call or office visit necessary)

- Your child will play/smile/interact for at least brief periods every 4 hours when the fever is down.
- Typical flu symptoms are present which may include fever (often high – 103, 104 degrees), sore throat, nasty cough, achiness, muscle pain, tiredness, chills, vomiting, diarrhea.


Continued



Checklist for who can be managed at home with symptomatic care.

(usually no phone call or office visit necessary)

- None of the other more potentially serious symptoms or situations described in this handout are present. For example, your child is responsive, able to sip fluids, has no breathing difficulty, and no chronic medical problems.

If yes to all  continue for symptomatic treatment advice.

Symptomatic Care

- **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol or other less costly store brand) or **ibuprofen** (Motrin, Advil or other less costly store brand) may be given for fever, aches and pain.

DO NOT give:

- Your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.
- Ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months of age.
- Aspirin or any products containing aspirin or salicylates such as Pepto Bismol.
- Click here for [Tylenol and Motrin dosage chart](#)

Symptomatic Care

- Give lots of cool, clear liquids so that your child does not get dehydrated (dried out).
 - Do not try to force your child to eat. It is normal to have less appetite with the flu.
 - If your child is vomiting, give small sips, very often.
 - Coughing helps clear mucus from the chest and lungs. Most children will not spit out the mucus but will swallow it, which is ok.
- Have your child get plenty of rest with a gradual return to normal activity.
- Avoid cigarette smoke and odor around your child.

Symptomatic Care

- Give cough and cold medicines sparingly. This includes both prescription and over-the-counter medicines.
 - For children younger than 6 years of age – cough and cold medicines do not work in this age group. They also can cause serious side effects.
 - Many brands of cough and cold medicines have the same kinds of medicines. Using more than 1 brand or mixing brands can cause a serious overdose and harm to your child. Also, some have multiple ingredients which may be unnecessary or harmful.
 - Do not use a combination cold medicine that contains acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Schools and Daycare

- Schools are taking a very conservative approach to H1N1 in order to do whatever they can to prevent spread of the virus and avoid school closings.
- They are sending children home with a fever of 100 degrees, or flu-like symptoms, “just in case”, and will not allow a return to school until there is no fever, without fever reducers, for 24 hours.
- Many children sent home will develop flu symptoms, many will not.
- The guidelines are in place as a public health precaution.

When can my child return to school?

- If your child is sent home it is NOT a reason to panic; there is nothing you, or we can do other than observe your child and treat symptoms as they develop.
- We can not override school policy and give notes for children to return to school.
- The official policy is that children can go back to school when they have no fever (without fever reducers) for 24 hours. They do not need a doctor's note.

What can I do to prevent illness?

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough into your elbow. Throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol based hand cleanser.
- Keep a distance of about 6 feet away from sick people.
- Keep surfaces clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant.
- Throw all used tissues away and do not share cups or utensils.

What about Vaccines?

- Seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for all children age 6 months and older.
- We will offer the nasal mist vaccine for healthy children over age 2 years (no history of wheezing) as well as the shot for all children over age 6 months. We will also offer parents the vaccine on a cash basis.
- Vaccines will begin September 14th and be given at your regularly scheduled well or sick appointments, or at flu clinic appointments that can be made up to 2 days in advance beginning September 14th.
- Children under age 9 years who have not had 2 doses of vaccine in the past will need 2 shots 4 weeks apart.
- It is extremely important for all children with chronic illnesses such as asthma to be immunized.

H1N1 Vaccine

- A vaccine against H1N1 is being produced and should be available beginning sometime in October.
- All vaccine is being supplied by the government and will be available at sites approved by the local health boards.
- We have applied to the health department to be a site to deliver the vaccine to our patients and will know more by the end of September or beginning of October if and when we will get the vaccine.

Summary

- Novel H₁N₁, “swine flu” is new and we are already seeing many cases in young children and teens.
- H₁N₁ symptoms are the same as seasonal flu symptoms. For the large majority of patients symptomatic treatment and rest is all that is needed.
- We expect there will be some patients with more serious illness and complications. Those at the most risk are children with underlying chronic medical conditions.
- Call us, or have your child seen for any of the more serious symptoms described in this presentation.
- Call in September/October for a seasonal flu shot for you and your child. Stay tuned for more information on the H₁N₁ vaccine.

Summary

- Be patient with us. The volume of patients calling and wanting to be seen far exceeds our usual volume. We are doing everything we can to adjust and ensure that those children who medically need to be seen will be seen.
- For further information:
 - Visit the CDC website at [CDC 2009 H1N1 Flu](#)
 - Visit Children's Healthcare of Atlanta [Flu information](#)