



PARENTS

The flu is an infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. Both novel H1N1 flu and seasonal flu are thought to spread mostly from person to person through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick. People also may get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their eyes, mouth or nose.

How serious is the flu?

The flu can be very serious, especially for younger children and children of any age who have one or more chronic medical conditions. These conditions include asthma or other lung problems, diabetes, weakened immune systems, kidney disease, heart problems and neurological and neuromuscular disorders.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

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.

How long can a sick person spread the flu to others?

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5-7 days after.

How can I protect my child against flu?

- Get a seasonal flu vaccine for yourself and your child to protect against seasonal flu virus.
- Keep surfaces like bedside tables, surfaces in the bathroom, kitchen counters and toys for children clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.
- Keep a distance of at least six feet from people who are sick.

You can be an example to your child by following proven disease-prevention methods and teaching them to do the same:

- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and warm water (or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as utensils, drinks or a toothbrush.

One of the best ways to help prevent and slow the spread of flu in the community is to stay home if you are sick and keep your child home from school or daycare if he or she is sick and/or has a fever.

Is there a vaccine to protect my child from H1N1 flu?

Yes. Contact your child's primary care provider or your local health department for vaccine availability.

Is there medicine to treat the flu?

Antiviral medication can treat both seasonal flu and the new H1N1 flu. This medication can make people feel better and get better sooner. However, they must be prescribed by a doctor and work best when started during the first 48 hours of illness. Antiviral medication can be given to children. Priority use for the medication is to treat people who are seriously ill or who have a medical condition that puts them at high risk of serious flu complications.

What should I use for hand cleaning?

Washing hands with soap and warm water (for as long as it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice) will help protect against many germs. When soap and running water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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What can I do if my child gets sick?

If your child is...	You should...
five years or older and otherwise healthy and gets flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough	consult your doctor as needed and make sure your child gets plenty of rest and drinks enough fluids
younger than five, or of any age and has a medical condition like asthma, diabetes, or a neurologic problem and develops flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough	call your doctor or get medical attention

This is because younger children and children who have chronic medical conditions (like asthma or diabetes) may be at higher risk of serious complications from the flu, including the novel H1N1 flu. Talk to your doctor early if you are worried about your child's illness.

What if my child seems very sick?

Even children who have always been healthy before or had the flu before can get a severe case of flu. Call or take your child to a doctor right away if your child of any age has:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- 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
- Has other conditions (like heart or lung disease, diabetes or asthma) and develops flu-like symptoms, including a fever and/or cough.

Can my child go to school, day care or camp if he or she is sick?

No. Your child should stay home to rest and to avoid giving the flu to other children.

When can my child go back to school after having the flu?

Keep your child home from school, day care or camp for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing medication.

What other advice do you have for parents?

- Plan for child care at home if your child gets sick, his childcare center is closed or school is dismissed. Check with your employer to find out if you can stay home to care for your children, work from home, or set up a flexible work schedule. If this is not possible, find a trusted person to care for your children at home (such as relatives, neighbors, co-workers or friends).
- Plan to monitor your family's health by checking for fever and other symptoms of flu.
- Urge your family members and friends who are at higher risk for serious disease from the flu to talk to their healthcare provider about a plan to protect them during the flu season. People at higher risk of serious disease from the flu include: pregnant women, children under 5 years old, senior adults, and people with chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart or lung disease.
- Update your emergency contact lists.
- Collect games, books, DVDs and comfort items to pass the time if childcare centers or schools are closed, or if you must keep a sick child home.