

THE FLU

The flu is a contagious disease and both the Seasonal flu (influenza) and the Novel H1N1 flu (formerly known as “swine flu”) are serious infections that can be dangerous, sometimes causing hospitalization and even death. Pregnant women are more likely to get sick with the flu than others and have more serious complications such as pneumonia and preterm labor. We want you to stay healthy and now is a very important time to take steps to protect yourself from the flu!

Signs and symptoms of the flu:

❖ Fever (over 100°F) with:

- ❖ headache
- ❖ extreme tiredness
- ❖ dry cough
- ❖ runny or stuffy nose
- ❖ muscle aches
- ❖ sore throat
- ❖ vomiting
- ❖ sometimes diarrhea

*****Please notify us if you have a fever over 100° and flu-like symptoms so that we can see you early on during the illness to decide if testing and treatment is necessary for you.**

*****Also notify us if you have had an exposure (within 6 feet) to someone who is suspected or confirmed to have influenza or H1N1. You may need to be treated with preventative medications.**

How do the novel H1N1 and seasonal influenza viruses spread?

Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something, such as a surface or objects with flu viruses on it, and then touching their mouth or nose.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- ❖ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- ❖ Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- ❖ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- ❖ Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- ❖ If you are sick with flu-like illness, it is recommended that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.
- ❖ Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures.
- ❖ Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues and other related items might could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious.

Schools and child care workers

Pregnant women working in school settings (e.g. teachers, day care workers) should follow the same guidance as non-pregnant school workers and the general public.

Vaccines

Vaccines are the best tool we have to prevent influenza, especially in higher risk patients such as pregnant women in **all** trimesters. Patients should get vaccinated against seasonal influenza as soon as vaccines become available. The yearly seasonal flu vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against novel H1N1 influenza. However, a separate novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and is anticipated to be ready for the public mid-October. The novel H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine - it is intended to be used along-side seasonal flu vaccine. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Department of Health, the 1st priority of patients to be vaccinated for H1N1 is being given to pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated. It is anticipated that the safety profile of licensed 2009 H1N1 vaccines will be similar to seasonal influenza vaccines; serious adverse events after vaccination are uncommon.

***We will begin flu vaccinations for our pregnant patients when our seasonal influenza vaccine arrives (estimated September 10th). If you will have a prenatal appointment in September, we will offer you the vaccine at that time. If you will not have an appointment until October, you may schedule a nurse visit for your vaccination. Once the H1N1 vaccine is ready for public use, we will also be offering this to our patients.