

LaGrange County Health Department Nursing Office

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WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS

The novel H1N1 flu virus is causing illness in infected persons in the United States and countries around the world. CDC expects that illnesses will continue for some time. As a result, you or people around you may become ill. If so, you need to recognize the symptoms and know what to do.

Symptoms

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with novel H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

Avoid contact with others

If you are sick, you may be ill for a week or longer. You should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel and not going to work or school, for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medication) If you leave the house to seek medical care, wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. In general, you should avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially people at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. With seasonal flu, people may be contagious from one day before they develop symptoms up to seven days after they get sick. Children, especially younger children, might potentially be contagious for longer periods. People infected with the novel H1N1 are likely to have similar patterns of infectiousness as with seasonal flu.

Treatment is available for those who are seriously ill

It is expected that most people will recover without needing medical care.

If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care. Your health care provider will determine whether flu testing or treatment is needed. Be aware that if the flu becomes widespread, less testing will be needed, so your health care provider may decide not to test for the flu virus. Antiviral drugs can be given to treat those who become severely ill with influenza.

There are two influenza antiviral medications that are recommended for use against novel H1N1 flu. The drugs that are used for treating novel H1N1 flu are called Tamiflu and Relenza.

As the novel H1N1 flu spreads, these antiviral medications may become in short supply.

Therefore, the drugs may be given first to those people who have been hospitalized or are at high risk of severe illness from flu. The medications work best if given within 2 days of becoming ill, but may be given later if illness is severe or for those at a high risk for complications.

Aspirin or aspirin-containing products (such as pepto bismol) should not be given to any confirmed or suspected ill case of novel H1N1 virus infection aged 18 years old or younger due to the risk of Reye's Syndrome. For relief of fever, other anti-pyretic medications are recommended such as Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Motrin or Nuprin. Children less than 4 years of age should NOT be given over the counter cold medications without first speaking with a health care provider.

Emergency Warning Signs

If you become ill and experience any of the following warning signs, seek emergency medical care.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- 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 that improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Protect Yourself, Your Family and Community

- Stay informed as to what is going on in the community.
- 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.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. This is the way that germs spread!
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to seek medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of fever-reducing medications.) Keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick.
- If you are sick and sharing a common space with other household members in your home, wear a facemask, if available and tolerable, to help prevent spreading the virus to others.

- If you don't have one yet, consider developing a family emergency plan as a precaution. This should include storing a supply of extra food, over the counter medications, and other essential supplies.