

## **Flu (Influenza) Information**

Influenza, also called “the flu, is caused by several germs (viruses). The flu that comes mostly in the winter months is called seasonal flu. Every year, about 200,000 people have to stay in the hospital when they come down with seasonal flu. Flu can be more severe in the very young, the elderly, pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses.

This year, in addition to the different types of seasonal flu, there is a new flu, called H1N1 (Swine flu). H1N1 has been more active in school settings and among young adults, but can be severe in all the people affected by seasonal flu. Every year new vaccines to protect people from getting the flu are made. This year there are plans for vaccines for both seasonal flu and H1N1.

*(Source for content on this page: Center for Disease Control, and NY State Department of Health)*

NOTE: You can call the INFORMATION LINE for the latest updates on the Seasonal FLU Vaccine. The number is 518-565-4490. Choose option 1 (Immunizations) and then select option 3 (For 2009 Seasonal Flu Clinic Schedule).

### **Symptoms: Seasonal Flu vs. H1N1**

Seasonal Flu is a respiratory illness. Symptoms of the flu include: fever, headache, extreme tiredness, runny nose and cough. These symptoms can be mild to severe. People with strong immune systems can fight off the virus that causes flu and their symptoms may be milder. Those people with weaker immune systems may have trouble fighting the virus and their symptoms can be severe, or lead to serious respiratory illnesses like pneumonia. The vaccine for seasonal flu is currently available.

H1N1 flu is different from the seasonal flu virus. H1N1 is a “new” virus”. H1N1 has just started making people sick this year. This new flu is a combination of viruses that normally infect humans, birds and pigs. The symptoms of this flu are the same as seasonal flu. Some people report gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea) as well. A vaccine to protect against H1N1 is being tested.

### **The Vaccine's Purpose**

Influenza vaccines help a person’s immune system fight the viruses that cause flu. The vaccine helps the immune system recognize the flu virus and start fighting it right away when it attacks.

Seasonal flu vaccine will only protect a person from seasonal flu virus. A vaccine for the H1N1 virus is currently being tested and will be available soon. To be protected from both seasonal and H1N1, people will need to have both flu vaccines.

## **Types of Seasonal Flu Vaccinations**

There are 2 types of vaccine that protect against seasonal flu: the "flu shot" and the nasal-spray.

The flu-shot is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The flu shot is approved for use in people older than 6 months, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The nasal-spray flu vaccine – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine"). LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 2 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

\*\*\*NOTE: Children less than 3 years of age and women who know that they are pregnant, can not receive flu vaccine that contains more than trace amounts of the preservation thimerosal.

## **Who Should NOT Get Vaccinated**

- People with a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome; and
- People who are allergic to chicken eggs or any other component of the vaccine.

## **Ways to Help Avoid Getting the Flu**

Important ways to avoid both seasonal and H1N1 flu and prevent its spread are frequent hand washing, use of alcohol based hand sanitizers, coughing or sneezing into one's sleeve, keeping at least six feet distance from people who have respiratory symptoms, and staying home when you are sick.

## **How Does it Spread?**

Flu viruses spread in by coughing and sneezing. Flu usually spreads from person to person but sometimes flu can spread when someone touches something with flu viruses on it and then touches their mouth or nose.

The flu virus can be spread to others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after becoming sick. That means that you can pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

## Who Should Get Vaccinated?

- anyone, including school-aged children, who want to reduce the risk of becoming ill with influenza or of transmitting influenza to others
- all children aged 6–59 months (i.e., 6 months–4 years)
- all persons older than 50 years of age
- children and adolescents (aged 6 months–18 years) receiving long-term aspirin therapy who therefore might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection;
- women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- adults and children who have chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus);
- adults and children who have immune system suppression (including immune system suppression caused by medications or by HIV)
- adults and children who have any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other neuromuscular disorders) that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk for aspiration
- residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities
- health-care personnel
- healthy household contacts (including children) and caregivers of children younger than 5 years and adults older than 50 years, with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children younger than 6 months of age
- healthy household contacts (including children) and caregivers of persons with medical conditions that put them at higher risk for severe complications from influenza.

## What to do if You Get Sick

- Rest
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco

Take medication to relieve the symptoms of flu (but never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms – and particularly fever – without first speaking to your doctor.)

In some cases, your doctors may choose to use certain antiviral drugs to treat the flu. (Influenza is caused by a virus, so antibiotics [like penicillin] don't work to cure it.)

## Contact Us

To receive more information, call or visit us at:

*Clinton County Health Department*  
*Health Services Unit*  
[133 Margaret Street](#)  
*Plattsburgh, NY 12901*  
*Tel: (518) 565-4848*