



Understanding Seasonal and H1N1 Influenza

What is the difference between the Seasonal Flu and the H1N1 (Swine) Flu?

There are no real differences in the symptoms from either Seasonal Influenza or the H1N1 Swine Flu. They are both viral infections of the nose, throat, windpipe, and bronchi. The main symptoms are a fever, cough, sore throat and runny nose. Usually there's more muscle pain, headache, fever, and chills than seen with the common cold.

What is the Cause of the Flu?

Seasonal flu is caused by influenza viruses. Flu viruses change yearly, which is why people can get the flu every year. It spreads rapidly because the incubation period is only 2 days.

H1N1 flu is caused by the H1N1 virus. It started in March 2009 and is swiftly spreading across the world. After exposure (close contact), 20% of people come down with symptoms in 4 to 6 days.

How Will I Know that My Child has the Flu?

If influenza (either seasonal or H1N1 flu) is widespread in your community and your child has flu symptoms, then he or she probably has flu. You don't need to call or see your child's doctor, unless your child is HIGH-RISK (see #6 below) or develops a possible complication of the flu (see the "When to call APA" section). Your child does not need any special tests unless your provider recommends them.

How to Treat Seasonal and H1N1 Flu

The treatment of both the seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu depends on your child's main symptoms. It's no different from treating symptoms of the common cold. Bed rest is not necessary. Antibiotics are not helpful.

1. **Fever or aches**

Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever over 102°F (39°C) or for any pain. Children and adolescents who have influenza should never take aspirin.

2. **Cough**

For children over age 6, give cough drops. If your child is over 1 year of age, give honey (1/2 to 1 teaspoon as needed). Never give honey to babies. If honey is not available, you can use corn syrup. Drugstore cough medicines are not as helpful as honey. Also, they are not approved for children under 4 years old.

3. **Sore throat**

Tylenol or ibuprofen is very helpful for throat pain. Children over 6 years old can suck on hard candy. Children over 1 year old can sip warm chicken broth or other warm fluids.

4. Stuffy or blocked nose

Saline (or warm-water) nose drops followed by suction (or nose blowing) will open most blocked noses. Use these “nasal washes” whenever your child can't breathe through the nose. You can buy saline spray without a prescription. Saline nose drops can also be made by adding 1/2 teaspoon (2 ml) of table salt to 1 cup (8 oz or 240 ml) of warm water. Use 2 or 3 drops at a time.

5. Antiviral medicine

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC recommend antiviral medicines be prescribed only for HIGH-RISK children (see #6) who come down with flu. Most children with influenza do not need antiviral medicine unless they develop serious symptoms (such as pneumonia). Antiviral medicines must be started within 48 hours of the start of flu symptoms to have an effect. They usually reduce the time your child is sick by 1 or 2 days. They improve the symptoms but do not eliminate them. If you have other questions about antiviral medicine, talk with your healthcare provider.

6. HIGH-RISK children for complications

The following children are at higher risk for complications from flu: lung disease (such as asthma), heart disease (such as a congenital heart disease), weak immune system (such as cancer), diabetes, sickle cell disease, kidney disease, diseases requiring long-term aspirin therapy, other chronic diseases, pregnant teens, or young children less than 2 years old.

7. Expected Course

The fever lasts 2 to 3 days, the runny or stuffy nose 1 to 2 weeks, and the cough 2 to 3 weeks. Your child may return to child care or school after the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Prevention of Flu

- Seasonal Flu: Yearly flu shots are the best way to prevent influenza and are recommended for all children over 6 months of age.
- H1N1 (Swine) Flu: When the H1N1 (swine) flu vaccination becomes available, children ages 6 months and older should be immunized.
- Preventing Spread to Others: The virus is spread by sneezing, coughing, and hand contact. Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash hands frequently. Stay home when sick. Your child may return to child care or school after the fever is gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

When to Call Advanced Pediatrics

Call us (night or day) if:

- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Breathing becomes difficult or fast
- Dehydration occurs (no urine in 12 hours, dry mouth, no tears)

Call us during the day if:

- Your think your child needs to be seen
- Your child is in the HIGH RISK group and has symptoms of the flu
- Earache or sinus pain occurs
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- Cough lasts more than 3 weeks
- Your child becomes worse

Advanced Pediatrics

Patient Care Line 303-699-6200