



From the desks of:

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Your Child and The Flu

Are you wondering how the flu may affect your child? Here are some up-to-date answers from Women's and Children's at CPMC!

Why is everyone so concerned?

H1N1 is a new variant of the flu virus so very few people have immunity. Although most cases of H1N1 have been mild, it spreads quickly among groups. Some groups such as pregnant woman, very young children and people with chronic illness may be at risk of developing pneumonia or other complications with this flu.

How is flu spread?

The flu virus is most commonly spread from person to person from respiratory droplets either directly (a child sneezes in your face) or indirectly (the droplets are on an object /surface and you touch that surface). In addition to vaccination, one of the best everyday ways to prevent the spread of flu, and many other viruses, is to wash your/your child's hands on a regular basis and to try not to touch your face as this is where viruses come in contact with your nose, eyes and mouth. Hands should be washed for 15-20 seconds in soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used. In addition, cover your/your child's mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze to prevent infected droplets from getting into the air.

If my child has a runny nose do they have the "swine flu"?

While both the H1N1 flu virus circulating currently and seasonal flu (likely to hit our community in the next few months) can cause runny noses, symptoms of the flu most often go beyond a runny nose. Other symptoms of both types of flu include fever (usually for 2 to 4 days), cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue. With H1N1 flu, diarrhea and vomiting have also been reported. If your child has H1N1 flu, they will almost always have fever (95% of the time in one study).

When should my child stay home from day care or school?

Flu is usually contagious from 1 day before illness is noted until about 5 to 7 days after. Keeping your child at home is an obvious choice if your child has fever and doesn't want to play or a difficult choice (it's just a runny nose- doesn't everyone have that?). This flu season more than others, you'll need to have an emergency plan in place for when your child needs to stay home. This may involve extended family or friends assisting you or even co-workers with sick children who can be in one place together.

Schools and day cares make recommendations for closure or keeping individual kids home based on the CDC and local public health department recommendations. Currently the CDC recommends children remain at home until 24 hours after resolution of fever (defined as 100°F or greater when taken by mouth). Your day care or school may decide to be more restrictive based on community or parent concerns.

What if my child gets sick?

If your child becomes ill with a runny nose or cough, do what you would normally do: encourage liquids and rest as needed and keep a close eye on them to see if they worsen. Keep them out of school or day care if they have a fever or are acting sick. Do not give your child aspirin or aspirin-containing products (bismuth subsalicylate/ Pepto-Bismol). You may give them acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) If your child has asthma, they may need to increase their frequency of breathing treatments, which should be done with a doctor's guidance.

When should I call my doctor?

If your child has fever (> 100°) or seems "not right," you should call your doctor's office to check in. Have a lower threshold to check in with your physician if there are people in your home at risk for more serious flu such as those with chronic disease, less than 5, older than 65, or if you or others in your household are/may be pregnant.

If you need to take your child to the doctor or the emergency room, make sure you let them know you are concerned about the flu. They may separate you from others in the waiting room, ask you or your child to wear a mask in waiting areas and wear a mask and eye protection when they come to examine your child.

Can't the doctor give my child a medicine or a vaccine?

Not everyone with H1N1 flu needs to be treated. Treatment is given to children <5 years old, pregnant women and people with chronic illness. If you or your child have come in contact with someone with the flu and are in one of the high risk groups or are health care providers you should receive prophylaxis (medicine to prevent getting sick). Otherwise you do not need medicine.

An effective vaccine is the best way to prevent disease. The seasonal flu vaccine will not protect against the H1N1 flu. It will come out this fall and should be received by you and your children per standard recommendations. The H1N1 flu vaccine is currently in production and should be available in October. The CDC is anticipating there will be enough vaccine, but is recommending that pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact, children 6 months through 4 years of age, and children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions be vaccinated first if there is a shortage.

What's happening at Women's and Children's at California Pacific Medical Center?

Our Pediatric Emergency Department is seeing a number of ill children who likely have the H1N1 flu. Luckily, very few of these children require admission to the hospital and rarely do they need to be treated. Any child admitted to the Pediatric ward is placed in an isolation room to prevent spread of the disease and our Child Life services bring toys and games to them to keep them entertained as they heal.

Check with your child's physician first, but if you think you need to bring your child to the Pediatric Emergency Department, come to 3700 California St (corner of California and Cherry) in San Francisco and follow the signs to the entrance and parking lot across the street (entrance to both is on Cherry St). The Emergency Department can be reached at 415-600-4444.

Resources for staying up-to-date

This Bulletin - Please email us at <mailto:ocomm@utterhealth.org> if you would like to receive it directly.

The Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov

Vaccination: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination>

School and day care policy: <http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/childcare/guidance.htm>

San Francisco Department of Public Health: <http://www.sfdhcdcp.org/fluprogram.html>

Marin Health and Human Services: <http://www.marinflu.org/swine.aspx>