

Flu information

1. General Information

a. What is the flu?

Influenza is a group of viruses that commonly is spread human to human through the droplets of infected moisture from the lungs and other infected parts of the person's respiratory tract

b. What are the differences in the common types that are currently being discussed?

Seasonal influenza (flu): is the most common variety, it is the type that appears in this area in the late summer and fall of every year. The specific strain of flu changes across the globe periodically but typically stays active in our communities until late spring.

Novel H1N1 flu: is the newest strain and is the variety that is gaining the most attention currently. Novel H1N1 (also referred to as "Swine flu" in the media) is a variety or strain of the virus that is made up of viruses of human, swine (pig), and avian (bird) components. Because very few individuals have a natural immunity to this particular novel strain of the flu it is easily passed from one individual to another and because of this has a higher potential of infecting greater numbers of people (although spread in the same manner as other flu)

c. Persons at greatest risk;

Expectant mothers

Parents with children under <6 months of age (primarily because children this young are not candidates for the flu immunizations)

Children and young adults between 6 months and 24 years of age

Healthcare and EMS workers

Persons between 25 and 64 years of age with medical conditions such as heart, lung, HIV diseases

2. What to expect if you get sick;

Fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, occasionally diarrhea and vomiting

The main difference noted between the Novel H1N1 strain and the typical seasonal flu is; a higher degree of fever, complaints such as vomiting and diarrhea, and a greater degree of respiratory symptoms. For the overall majority of individuals that become infected with the Novel H1N1 strain it will be just like having a more severe case of the flu.

3. When to seek medical help?

Persistent higher grade fever (greater than 101°F) over more than a few days

Any respiratory symptoms such as; difficulty breathing, trouble catching your breath or chest pain

Any person infected that is in one of the greatest risk categories listed above

Your physician may elect to treat you with antiviral medication that has been shown to reduce the symptoms and duration of the illness and is typically considered to be most effective the earlier it is given after the flu symptoms begin

4. Methods that you may use to “Stop the Spread” of the flu

a. Get vaccinated; both the seasonal and Novel H1N1 immunizations as soon as they become available. The seasonal flu immunization is available currently but the Novel immunization will not most likely be available until late October

b. Wash your hands frequently; soap and water are preferred but if unavailable the use of alcohol based cleansing gel ($\geq 60\%$) has been shown to be effective until soap and water become available

c. Cover your cough; cough into your sleeve and or a tissue, *and then wash your hands*

d. Stay home: from the work place if you are sick, also keep your children at home if they are sick. Remain home for 24 hours following the resolution of your symptoms or after your un-medicated fever has resolved

Websites and links to further information:

www.flu.gov

www.maricopa.gov