

2009-2010 SEASONAL INFLUENZA GUIDANCE



INFLUENZA SEASON IS STARTING. GET READY NOW!

The influenza (flu) season is starting and will last through the fall and winter. More than one kind of flu virus will be spreading this season, including seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu. If you get the flu, you can get sick and can spread the flu to others at home, at work, and in the community. Please read the following information for answers to some of the commonly asked questions.

HOW IS THE FLU SPREAD?

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing of people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five days after becoming sick. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF THE FLU?

Symptoms of flu include fever or chills and cough or sore throat. In addition, symptoms of flu can include runny nose, body aches, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, or vomiting.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I GET SICK WITH FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS?

If you are sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius) or signs of a fever (have chills, feel very warm, have a flushed appearance, or are sweating). This should be determined without the use of fever-reducing medicines (any medicine that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).

Some individuals are at higher risk for complications from the flu. Children younger than five years of age, pregnant women, people of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as pulmonary disease, asthma, diabetes, neuromuscular disorders, or heart disease), and people 65 years of age and older are more likely to get complications from the flu. If you are at higher risk for complications from the flu and you are sick, contact your health care provider as soon as possible.

Emergency warning signs that require urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen

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- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT GETTING THE SEASONAL FLU?

One of the most important steps in prevention of the seasonal flu is to get the annual seasonal flu vaccination. About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop that protect against influenza virus infection. Getting the flu vaccine is the first and most important step to protecting yourself, your family and your community.

In addition to getting vaccinated, it is important to remember to cover your mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze and to dispose of the tissue in the trash. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand cleaner. It is especially important to wash your hands before and after preparing food or eating, after using the restroom, before and after touching your nose, eyes, or mouth, and after touching items that may have been exposed to bodily fluids.

WHO SHOULD GET VACCINATED?

Annual seasonal influenza vaccinations are required for all active duty military personnel, selected Reserves and healthcare workers. In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, certain people should get vaccinated each year either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for high risk persons.

According to the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC), people who should get vaccinated each year are:

- Children aged 6 months through 18 years old
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from the flu, including household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than six months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

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WHO SHOULD NOT GET VACCINATED BEFORE CONSULTING THEIR PROVIDER?

According to the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC), the following people should not be vaccinated before consulting a health care provider:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past
- People who developed Guillain-Barre' Syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously
- Children less than six months of age (the influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group)
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen

If you have questions about receiving the flu vaccine, please consult your health care provider.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NASAL SPRAY AND THE FLU SHOT?

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 six months of age and older, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.

The nasal-spray flu vaccine is 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 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. The nasal spray can be given to healthy persons who live with or care for those in a high risk group. The one exception is healthy persons who care for persons with severely weakened immune systems who require a protected environment; these healthy persons should get the inactivated vaccine.

WHEN AND WHERE WILL SEASONAL FLU VACCINES BE OFFERED?

Active duty: If you are an active duty member stationed at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, the NHCQ preventive medicine vaccination team will be providing seasonal flu vaccinations at your worksite location beginning September 9, 2009.

The point of contact for scheduling unit vaccinations is the NHCQ Environmental Health Officer at (703) 784-1640.

Active duty members who miss their unit vaccination evolution should report to the NHCQ Preventive Medicine Department, second floor, hallway D, between the hours of 7:30 to 12:00 and 1:00 to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

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Beneficiaries: Vaccinations will be available for all eligible military beneficiaries at the NHCQ Immunizations Clinic beginning, Tuesday, September 8, 2009. Immunization clinic hours are Monday-Friday mornings 7:30-1200; Monday, Tuesday, and Friday afternoons 1:00 to 3:30 pm; Wednesday and Thursday afternoon from 2:00 to 3:30 pm.

The clinic will also be offering extended hours for flu vaccinations between the hours of 3:30 to 5:30 on the following Tuesday afternoons: Sep. 15, 22 and 29.

For any questions regarding flu vaccinations, please contact the nursing staff in the NHCQ Immunizations Clinic at (703) 784-1712.

Civilian/contract employees: Specific occupational groups who are at higher risk for exposure and/or considered essential employees, such as health care personnel, police officers, firefighters, school teachers or daycare providers, will be eligible to receive seasonal flu vaccinations from NHCQ. All other civilian/contract employees onboard Marine Corps Base Quantico should seek vaccinations from their personal primary care provider or from one of the many other locations where annual flu vaccinations will be offered.

WILL THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE PROTECT AGAINST THE H1N1 FLU?

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to provide protection against the H1N1 flu. There will be a separate vaccine to protect against the H1N1 flu strain. The H1N1 vaccine is currently under development and expected to be released as early as October. Details of the H1N1 vaccination campaign will be released as information becomes available.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO PLAN FOR THE FLU SEASON?

Be sure to make plans to care for sick household members or for children if schools dismiss students or child care programs close. Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home. Have the following items on hand: a supply of fever-reducing medicines that contain acetaminophen or ibuprofen, alcohol-based hand cleaners, tissues, and other items that may be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick. To find out more about preparing for the flu, go to www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636).

The above information is current with Centers for Disease and Prevention guidance as of September 1, 2009.