

Health Tips

The flu is the flu is the flu.....

There is a lot of talk going on today about the "seasonal" flu versus the H1N1 (Swine) flu. In fact, it can be down right confusing! So I am going to try to provide some, hopefully, easy answers to my most asked questions.



Kim Savage
Director of Nursing
& Compliance

Why should I worry about getting the flu?

- Each year in the United States more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu-related complications, and; about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes.

I got the flu shot and still got the flu. Why?

- Think about jelly beans. There are many different flavors of jelly beans but they are all still jelly beans. In the same way, there are many different strains of the flu virus. Some make you sick for a day others put you in the hospital. In the end, it is still a flu virus.
- Each year the Center for Disease Control (CDC) takes samples of all the different flu viruses from all over the world. They pick out the 2-3 strains that tend to make people the most ill and develop a vaccine to prevent those specific strains.

So what is the difference between the "seasonal" flu and the H1N1?

- Nothing really. It is just a strain of the flu virus that developed after the "seasonal" flu vaccine had been developed. In fact, if the H1N1 outbreak had been a little earlier it probably would have been put into the seasonal flu vaccine.
- However, the H1N1 virus is more likely to infect children and young people than the elderly.

Are the symptoms of the H1N1 virus any different for the "seasonal" flu?

- Most H1N1 symptoms are the same as seasonal flu: fever (usually high), coughing, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, chills, and fatigue. Swine flu can also cause vomiting and diarrhea.

What can I do to prevent the flu?

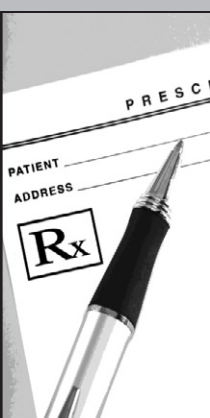
- Get vaccinated. Seasonal flu vaccine is now available at all Eastern Shore Rural Health Centers.
- The H1N1 vaccine should be available on the Eastern Shore within the next several weeks. Pregnant women and children will be the first groups vaccinated per the CDC guidelines.
- Listen to your local radio stations and watch the local newspapers for up to date information on the H1N1 vaccine.
- If you are sick stay home until you have been without a fever for at least 24 hours.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and throw the tissue away.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. That is the way germs spread.

Should I go to the doctor if I think I have the flu?

- Pregnant women, children and those people with chronic medical conditions should talk to their doctor if they get flu symptoms this season.
- The following are emergency warning signs:
In children: trouble breathing, bluish skin color, not drinking enough fluids, not waking up or not interacting, fever with a rash
In adults: difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, sudden dizziness, confusion, severe or persistent vomiting.

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