



FIGHT THE FLU!



FAQ (frequently asked questions)

Flu Prevention & Treatment

How can I prevent the spread of flu?

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue, or sleeve, when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol hand sanitizer often
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Stay home when you are sick
- Get a flu shot

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms include fever, sore throat, muscle aches, runny nose, headache, cough and fatigue. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea are not symptoms of the regular seasonal flu but are symptoms of H1N1 (swine flu).

If I get sick, how do I know when I'm contagious and when I can come back to work?

You are contagious starting one day before your symptoms first appear. It's recommended that you stay at home until at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

How can I take care of myself at home?

Get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids (such as water) and take medications to help lower your temperature such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®).

Is there medicine available to treat the flu?

Yes, they are called antivirals. Antivirals are medications that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antivirals can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. Antiviral medications used to treat the flu work best when started within 48 hours after your symptoms begin. They may also prevent serious flu complications. This fall, antivirals may be prioritized for persons with severe illness or those at higher risk for flu complications. Check with your doctor to see if you are at high risk.

Should I be concerned about the flu?

Pregnant women and children and adults who have a condition such as asthma or diabetes or who have a suppressed immune system for any reason are at highest risk of developing complications from the flu.

For more about the flu, visit the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) site](#).

Seasonal Flu Shots

How do I get a seasonal flu shot?

Beginning December 1, HealthPartners Medical Group clinics anticipate having enough seasonal flu vaccine available for *all* patients who request it. HealthPartners Clinic patients can receive a seasonal flu shot in one of several ways:

- **Nurse appointments:** call your clinics [appointment scheduling number](#) to schedule a nurse flu vaccine appointment
- **Add on to a previously scheduled appointment:** request to add a seasonal flu shot at your next clinic appointment
- **Walk-in visits at HealthPartners Quick Clinic:** if you live or work near Woodbury, you can receive a seasonal flu vaccine at our walk-in [HealthPartners Quick Clinic](#). It is located within our Woodbury Clinic and is open 5-9 p.m. on weekdays and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. No appointments are necessary.

Can I get the flu from a flu shot?

No. Some people may have some aches or a slight fever after a flu shot but this is not influenza. The most common side effects are slight soreness around the injection site for a short time.

Can I have allergic reactions to a flu shot?

Serious allergic reactions to a flu shot are rare, but if you have ever had Guillain Barre Syndrome or a serious allergic reaction to eggs, thimerosal or a previous flu shot, check with your doctor to make sure a flu shot is safe for you.

When should I get a flu shot?

You can get a flu shot as early as you want and it will protect you for the entire flu season. *Note:* Seasonal flu vaccinations do *not* protect against the H1N1 virus.

Can I get both my seasonal flu shot and my H1N1 shot at the same time?

It depends on the form of vaccine you get. If you are receiving the injected vaccine, you can get both at the same time. If you are getting one in the form of the nasal mist and the other as an injection you may also get them at the same time. If you wish to receive both in the form of nasal mist, the vaccines must be at least four weeks apart.

Are flu shots covered by insurance?

Most HealthPartners plans cover preventive care 100 percent, and since flu shots are considered preventive care they would be fully covered (both seasonal *and* H1N1). However, you should check your plan documents or call Member Services to find out for sure.

What do I wear for a flu shot?

Please wear a shirt or blouse that has short sleeves or is loose enough to roll up so that the shot can be given in your upper arm.

Visit the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) site for more [FAQ on seasonal flu shots](#).

H1N1 (swine flu)

How do I get an H1N1 flu shot?

If you or one of your family members are in one of these targeted high risk groups and currently receive your medical care at a HealthPartners Medical Group Clinic, *please call your clinic's [appointment scheduling number](#) to schedule a vaccination.* Limited vaccine supply is available for:

- Pregnant women
- Household members of children less than 6 months of age
- Children 6 months through 9 years of age
- Children and adolescents 10-18 years of age who have a risk condition such as asthma, diabetes or who have a suppressed immune system
- Health care workers

What is the difference between H1N1 and the regular seasonal flu?

The H1N1 virus has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. As far as symptoms, H1N1 can include all the regular flu symptoms as well as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

What are the priority groups for the H1N1 vaccination?

- Pregnant Women
- Household members of children less than 6 months of age
- Children 6 months through 9 years of age
- Children and adolescents 10-18 years of age who have a risk condition such as asthma, diabetes or who have a suppressed immune system
- Health care workers

How are the priority groups for the H1N1 shot determined?

The manufacturers and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) along with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) determine the age ranges for vaccines based on the age groups that the vaccines are tested in. Health care workers and first responders are included because of the need to stay healthy and continue to work as they are critical to a community's ability to function. The other groups are people who have been most severely affected by the H1N1 illness so far.

If I am not in one of the priority groups, will I still be able to get a shot?

The CDC and MDH will provide guidelines for clinics to administer the vaccination. It is expected that there will initially be enough vaccine to cover just the priority groups, but more vaccine will eventually be produced to supply the broader population. Check the [Minnesota Department of Health site](#) for up-to-date info.

Is there medicine available to treat the H1N1 flu?

Yes. The same antivirals used to treat the seasonal flu work against H1N1. See the "flu prevention and treatment" section.

When should I seek medical help? Are there danger signs I should watch for?

In children, warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or difficulty breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting (listless)
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough; this could be a sign of pneumonia

In adults, warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- New or sudden confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough; this could be a sign of pneumonia

Will shots be offered at the same locations as seasonal flu shots?

HealthPartners Clinics will offer the vaccine at all clinic locations. Other clinics may or may not offer them — call your clinic to find out for sure.

Does my insurance cover H1N1 shots?

Most HealthPartners plans cover preventive care 100%, and since flu shots are considered preventive care they would be fully covered (both seasonal *and* H1N1). However, you will need to check your plan documentation or call Member Services to find out for sure.

Are there other places I can go to get up-to-date information on H1N1?

Information about H1N1 is constantly changing. Visit any of the following Web pages for important up-to-date information:

- [Minnesota Department of Health site](#)
- [Government Flu Site](#)
- [Healthwise bulletin](#)