

Key Facts for the 2009-2010 Flu Season

Know
What to Do
About the Flu

Flu season is unpredictable.

No one knows the severity of illness the 2009 H1N1 flu will cause or the amount of illness that may occur as a result of seasonal flu. It is important to make plans for different situations.

The local situation will determine our local response.

We expect to see a wide range of disease patterns across the country. The Allen County Health Department will have recommendations for our community based on the severity and the extent of disease in our region. If the severity of illness increases, you may be asked to do more to increase the physical distance between people – called social distancing. For example, spacing desks/people farther apart, working from home, or cancelling large community gatherings. People with chronic medical conditions should talk to their health care provider now about what they should do if they get the flu.

It may be hard to know what type of flu is making people sick.

In the fall and winter, it will be very hard to tell if someone who is sick has 2009 H1N1 or seasonal flu, or something else. At this time, the Health Department and medical authorities are not planning to recommend laboratory tests. Anyone who has the symptoms of a flu-like illness should stay home and not go out except to seek medical care if needed.

Recognize flu symptoms.

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.

Vaccines can help protect against the flu.

There will be 2 different flu vaccines this year. People at highest risk of serious flu complications should talk to their health care provider about getting a flu shot. The *seasonal flu shot* is important for young children, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease, and people 65 years and older. People who should talk to their health care provider about the *2009 H1N1 flu shot* include children, pregnant women, and people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart/lung disease.

There is medicine to treat the flu.

Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight against the flu and can make your illness milder. Antiviral medicines are not given to all people during flu season because most people get better on their own and over-use can promote antiviral-resistant viruses.

Help prevent the spread of germs with everyday healthy habits.

Clean your hands often. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Clean surfaces that are frequently touched like doorknobs, desks, keyboards and phones. Use cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Disinfection beyond regular cleaning is not necessary. If you are sick with flu like symptoms, stay home for 24 hours after your fever has gone away without the use of fever-reducing medicines.