

# Take Three Actions to Fight Flu

*This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.*

Welcome to this CDC podcast on influenza. I'm Dr. Tony Fiore.

Flu is a serious contagious disease. Each year in the United States, on average, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die from seasonal flu-related complications.

This flu season could be worse than recent years because there is a new and very different influenza virus causing illness called 2009 H1N1 flu. CDC expects both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu to cause illness, hospital stays, and deaths this season and is preparing for an early and possibly severe flu season.

CDC recommends a three-step approach to fighting the flu: vaccination; everyday preventive actions, including frequent hand washing and staying home when sick; and the correct use of antiviral drugs.

First, get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best protection we have against influenza. The vaccine for seasonal flu is available now. Initial doses of vaccine for 2009 H1N1 flu are also available now, with additional doses available later this year.

The seasonal flu vaccine is especially important for people at higher risk of serious complications from flu. This includes young children; pregnant women; people with chronic health conditions, like asthma, diabetes, or heart and lung disease; and people 50 and older. This season, all children and adolescents are also recommended to get vaccinated.

Initial doses of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine are currently available and additional doses will become available later in the fall and winter. CDC recommends that certain people get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine first. Vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of getting sick or having serious complications from 2009 H1N1 flu and others who are high risk because they work on the medical frontlines, like healthcare workers and emergency responders.

People who live with or provide care for children younger than six months of age should be vaccinated against both seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu because these children cannot be vaccinated themselves and are at increased risk of complications from both seasonal and H1N1 flu. Ask your doctor if you should get 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

Second, take everyday preventive actions to fight flu. The flu spreads from person-to-person primarily through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with flu. People may also get sick by touching something with flu viruses on it, and then touching their mouth or nose. Here are some steps you can take to help prevent the spread of germs:

- cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze;
- wash your hands often with soap and water;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; and
- try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you're sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. If you're sick with flu symptoms, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.

It's also important to follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds, and other measures to keep our distance from each other to avoid spreading flu.

And third, take antiviral drugs if your doctor recommends them. Most people who have gotten sick with 2009 H1N1 have been able to recover at home without needing medical care and the same is true of seasonal flu. But some people are at higher risk for serious flu-related complications. This season, the priority for antiviral drugs is to treat people who are very sick, such as people who are hospitalized. In addition, people with flu-like symptoms who are at increased risk of serious flu complications, including pregnant women, very young children, people 65 and older, and anyone with certain chronic health conditions should be considered for early treatment.

The clinical judgment of a healthcare provider is the most important part of deciding when to give antiviral treatment. Treatment works best if begun within 48 hours of the start of symptoms.

If you or your child are in a high risk group and develop flu-like symptoms, or if you are concerned about your or your child's illness, consult a healthcare provider for advice on whether you need medical care. For information about flu symptoms and warning signs of severe illness, go to [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov).

CDC recommends that you take these three actions to help protect yourself and others from influenza, especially during the 2009-2010 flu season: vaccination, everyday prevention measures, and the correct use of antiviral drugs.

*For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*