

HEALTH ADVISORY

Seasonal Influenza A (H1N1)

Look for these symptoms:

- High fever ($\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}/101^{\circ}\text{F}$)
- Sore throat and runny nose
- Difficulty in breathing
- Cough
- Weakness
- Headache
- Redness of eye
- Diarrhea (*common in children*)

KEY FACTS:

- Human Influenza (flu) occurs all over the world, it is estimated that annually 5 – 10% of adults and 20 – 30% of children get influenza globally. It is caused by three types of influenza viruses, labeled A, B, and C.
- Type A influenza viruses are further divided into subtypes. Currently, influenza A(H1N1) and A(H3N2) are the circulating seasonal influenza A virus subtypes.
- Similar to other seasonal influenza viruses, Influenza A (H1N1) causes acute respiratory infection with fever and other symptoms listed above. The infection is predominantly self-limiting but could be of varying severity, ranging from asymptomatic infection to fatal disease.
- Illness tends to be more severe in the elderly; infants and young children; pregnant women; those with diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases and other underlying medical conditions including those which decrease immunity. Deaths occur mainly in the elderly and those with pre-existing chronic diseases.
- The disease caused by influenza virus infection can be cured by timely and specific treatment, but complications - including lung infection (primary influenza viral pneumonitis or bacterial pneumonia), middle ear infection and worsening of underlying chronic medical conditions may occur.
- Infection spreads mainly by respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs and sneezes. Short-distance airborne spread of influenza viruses may occur, particularly in crowded enclosed spaces. Hand contamination and direct inoculation (e.g. through reuse of syringes/needles for injection) of the virus is another possible mode of spread.

	Do's	Don'ts
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice general hygiene; take due care of personal hygiene; and maintain cleanliness of surroundings. • Reduce time spent in crowded areas. Wear mask and keep a distance of at least 1 meter from the people with symptoms. • If you have flu symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wear a mask; ○ Make sure you cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing; ○ Report to the relevant authorities as soon as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid unnecessary contact with the people suffering with flu symptoms. • Do not take medicine without doctor's prescription. • Don't spit in public spaces • Avoid going to crowded places. • Don't travel if you have the flu symptoms.
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to isolate the person suffering from symptoms as it can spread to others. • Immediately visit a doctor and seek for medical attention. • Antiviral drugs for influenza are recommended to reduce severe complications and deaths. Ideally they need to be administered early (within 48 hours of onset of symptoms). • Oseltamivir or other similar antiviral drugs are most frequently given. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't wait for symptoms to worsen before approaching a doctor/health facility.

About Seasonal Influenza Vaccine:

- Available as flu shot (inactivated influenza vaccine) at selected clinical practices but not at the UN Clinic.
- No vaccine provides 100% protection.
- Seasonal influenza viruses evolve continuously, which means that people can get infected multiple times throughout their lives. Therefore the components of seasonal influenza vaccines are reviewed frequently (currently biannually) and updated periodically to ensure continued effectiveness of the vaccines. Hence, the flu shot has to be taken every year.
- The vaccination is only for prevention. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses, doctor visits, missed-work or school due to flu, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalizations and deaths.
- Vaccination is a must for people suffering from respiratory diseases (Bronchial Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, etc.)
- Vaccines are available in two different forms:
 - those providing protection against two influenza A viruses (an H1N1 and an H3N2) and an influenza B virus;
 - and those providing protection against two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses.