



PROTECT YOURSELF:

3 EASY STEPS FOR FIGHTING THE FLU

All the talk about H1N1 – commonly called swine flu – in the news recently seems only to have added to the confusion and fear for many people.

“We tend to hear about the worst case scenario,” says **Paul Beckfield, MD**, an urgent care physician at Dean’s East Clinic in Madison. “From a public health and safety standpoint, I think it’s wise to be prepared, but often that scenario doesn’t play out.”

Adriana Tobar, MD, a family physician at Dean’s Riverview Clinic in Janesville, agrees. “It’s very easy to get confused and overwhelmed with all the information out there right now,” she confirms. “But the important thing for people to do is follow the hand washing and other hygiene principles recommended every flu season. It sounds so simple that many people consider them unimportant.”

Below, Dr. Beckfield and Dr. Tobar offer clear information to help you sort out fact from fiction. They also explain three easy action steps you can take to protect yourself and your family this flu season.

STEP 1: Get your flu shots.

Seasonal influenza shots (for the “regular” flu) are recommended for everyone this year for two reasons. First, they provide protection from the seasonal influenza virus, which causes 36,000 deaths in this country each year. Second, they help doctors pinpoint cases of H1N1. For example, if a person develops flu symptoms long after receiving the seasonal flu shot, that person may have contracted the H1N1 virus.

While these viruses can be dangerous by themselves, often the real concern is developing pneumonia. Symptoms of both the seasonal flu and H1N1 are similar to a severe cold:

- Fever (usually 100° or higher)
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose
- Extreme fatigue
- Headache and Body Aches

Seasonal flu shots will be given earlier this year in an effort to inoculate as much of the population as possible before H1N1 shots are ready.

“In my experience working in urgent care, we haven’t seen *nearly* the flu epidemics in recent years as we did in decades past,”

shares Dr. Beckfield. “We can really see that the seasonal flu vaccines have made a huge difference!”

H1N1 flu shots are recommended for people who fall into one of several high-risk groups. While the high-risk groups for seasonal influenza traditionally include the very young, the very old and those with compromised immune systems, H1N1 risk groups follow a different pattern:

- Pregnant women
- Children 6 months – 24 years old
- Anyone with an infant under the age of 6 months in their household (because children <6 months cannot be vaccinated themselves but are at high risk for H1N1)
- Healthcare workers
- People up to the age of 65 with an underlying health condition

STEP 2: Keep it Clean.

“Although it’s a different strain of the flu, the same principles of public health apply for preventing H1N1,” Dr. Beckfield explains. “Practice good hygiene and good common sense.”

- **Wash hands** frequently with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds. That’s about the time it takes to sing the alphabet song. Always wash before eating or handling food.
- **Use hand sanitizer** between hand washings.
- **Cover your mouth with a tissue** when coughing or sneezing. If a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm rather than your hand.
- **Stay away from sick people.** This

may be particularly important for anyone in a H1N1 high-risk group.

- **Maximize your immune system** by getting enough sleep, maintaining good nutrition and exercising regularly.

STEP 3: Keep it to yourself.

Since few people have any immunity to H1N1, isolation is key to minimizing the spread of this virus. That means *stay home* if you get sick.

“Most medical facilities will be setting up a phone triage system for people to call for diagnosis and treatment advice,” says Dr. Beckfield.

Dr. Tobar explains: “At the beginning, we were trying to identify every single patient with H1N1 for tracking purposes,” she says. “Treatment is the same either way, so help isolate the bug by calling first.”

Treatment recommendations include:

- Stay home from school or work for a full 24 hours after the last sign of fever.
- Consider keeping other children home if a sibling gets H1N1 because they may have the virus before symptoms appear.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink lots of fluids.
- Take acetaminophen or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) for body aches and fever.
- Use cough medicine if needed for better sleep.

“If you just don’t seem to be feeling better or you experience any shortness of breath, then it’s time to see your doctor to rule out pneumonia,” warns Dr. Tobar.



WE’RE HERE TO HELP FIGHT FLU

- **Seasonal flu shot clinics** are currently available at Dean
- **Flu Vaccine Information line (24/7)**
– (608) 250-1383 or
– (877) 277-3326 (toll free)
- Also visit www.deancare.com/flu
- H1N1 (Swine Flu) vaccine will be available in late October at the earliest. Once it is available, we will establish clinics to administer it.

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