

ECHO Questions and Answers

“Know What To Do About H1N1 Flu”

HOST: Please be sure to alert audiences that this is a “special ECHO show” to inform our audiences about the H1N1 flu – and where to get information about this serious virus. This program was produced by ECHO and the Minnesota Department of Health but information may help others as the information is relevant around the world.

1. What is the difference between seasonal flu and H1N1 flu?

Sample Answer:

- Seasonal flu is the flu that comes around every winter.
- H1N1 is the new flu that came around last spring.
- No one is immune H1N1, so it spreads easily.
- The symptoms are mostly the same for both kinds of flu:
 - fever
 - cough
 - sore throat
 - runny or stuffy nose
 - headache
 - body aches
 - fatigue

- People with H1N1 also sometimes have vomiting or diarrhea.

2. What can we do to protect ourselves and our families from getting H1N1 flu?

Sample Answer:

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
- Use a tissue – or cough into your sleeve [demonstrate]
- Wash your hands often – with soap and water or an alcohol rub [demonstrate]
- Stay home if you’re sick with flu symptoms.

3. Do you need to be vaccinated against both kinds of flu?

Sample answer:

- There are vaccines for both Seasonal and H1N1 flu.
- They can be given as a shot or as a nasal spray.
- You will need both vaccines to be protected this year.
- It's especially important to get the H1N1 vaccine if you
 - are pregnant.
 - are between six months and 24 years old
 - take care of a baby under six months old
 - have a health problem like diabetes, a heart condition, lung disease, kidney disease or liver disease, a neurological disease or a blood problem, like sickle cell disease, or an immune problem.

4. Where can we get the H1N1 vaccine and how much does it cost?

Sample Answer:

- There will be plenty of H1N1 vaccine, but it won't all be available right away. The first doses will come to Minnesota in October and more will be made available each month.
- Ask your local health department when and where to get vaccinated.
- The vaccine itself is free but there may be a small fee for giving it.
- Your local health department will help make sure that ability to pay won't keep you from getting vaccinated.

5. Are there any side effects to receiving the H1N1 vaccine?

Sample Answer:

- Some people may have very mild flu-like symptoms after getting the vaccine.
- These symptoms can last up to two days.
- The place where you get a shot may be sore, red or swollen for a brief time.
- The vaccine protects against the flu disease, which can be severe or even fatal.
- People who are allergic to eggs or egg products cannot get the flu shot because the shots are made from eggs. Nurses will ask patients before giving the flu shot if they are allergic to eggs.

6. (AFRICAN and ALL) In our culture we are concerned the vaccine may contain gelatin or pork products. Is that the case?

Sample Answer:

- Some flu vaccines do contain gelatin or pork products, others do not. You can ask about it before you get vaccinated.
- In 2001, the World Health Organization asked a group of Islamic legal scholars to comment on the use of these materials in medicines and vaccines.
- The scholars generally supported use of these materials in vaccines and other medicines.
- **ECHO HOST:** The scholars' statement, a list of vaccines and their ingredients, and other information can be found on the internet mdhflu.com or echominnesota.org

7. (LATINO and ALL) In our culture, there is a concern that people may be reluctant to come in for vaccination or treatment – only to head straight for the emergency room when they get sick enough.

Sample Answer:

- Vaccination is important because it can keep you from getting sick
- You should be sure to talk to a doctor if you have flu symptoms and you are pregnant, or you have health problems other than flu.
- You should also talk to a doctor if you have severe symptoms like trouble breathing, dizziness, confusion, or severe vomiting.
- Call before you go in to see a doctor, so steps can be taken to avoid exposing others to the flu.

8. (ASIAN and ALL) In our culture, we are concerned that going in to see a doctor can help to bring on the illness that we are worried about. What can you tell us about that?

Sample Answer:

- When you get vaccinated, you aren't really seeking treatment for an illness.
- Vaccines are given to people who are well, to protect them from getting sick.
- Don't hesitate to talk to a doctor if you know you are already sick – especially if you are pregnant or you have other health problems besides flu.
- Also be sure to talk to a doctor if you have severe symptoms like trouble breathing, dizziness, confusion, or severe vomiting.

9. What about undocumented residents, can they get the vaccine and will they be reported to the government if they go to a clinic or see a doctor?

Sample Answer:

- Public health agencies and clinics do not speak for other government agencies and asking about immigration status is not required information to receive a flu shot
- The job of medicine and public health is to treat and prevent disease.
- It is not their job to deal with immigration issues or enforce immigration laws.

10. How “sick is sick” and when should I go to the clinic or to see a doctor?

Sample answer:

- Talk to a doctor if you have flu symptoms and you are pregnant, or if the ill child is 4 years of age or younger.
- Talk to a doctor if you have flu symptoms and you have diabetes, a heart condition, lung disease, kidney disease or liver disease, a neurological disease or a blood problem like sickle cell disease or an immune problem.
- Talk to a doctor right away if you have severe symptoms like trouble breathing, dizziness, confusion, or severe vomiting.
- Call before you go in to see a doctor, so steps can be taken to avoid exposing others to the flu.
- To keep from overloading clinics and hospitals it’s best to **call first** to see if you need to see a doctor or can stay home and take care of yourself with anti-viral medications like Tami-Flu to treat the symptoms.

11. I’m afraid to miss work because I may lose my job if I tell them I am sick. What is best?

Sample answer:

- Health officials can’t control what employers choose to do about this.
- However, all employers are being urged to let employees stay home if they are sick.
- Employers shouldn’t insist on having sick employees tested for H1N1, since it is not possible to test everyone who has flu symptoms.
- If your employer has questions, have them call your local health department.

12. Is it safe to travel out of the United States or have family come to the United States given the H1N1 virus is a concern?

Sample Answer:

- H1N1 is already widespread, in every corner of the world.
- For that reason, we are less concerned about people being infected in one country and taking H1N1 to another country,
- For that reason, there are currently no travel restrictions or advisories because of H1N1.
- If you have flu symptoms, you should not fly – an airplane is no different than any other public place.

13. How can I stay informed and find out more information about the vaccine and the H1N1 flu?

Sample answer:

- **GUESTS READ:** For more information call your local health department to find out about where to find anti-viral medications and H1N1 vaccines at low or no cost.
- **HOSTS READ:** Updates will be made often in Minnesota visit www.echominnesota.org or mdhflu.com or NATIONALLY visit flu.gov

14. What else would you like to add that may help us understand how to keep ourselves healthy from H1N1 flu?

Sample Answer:

- You may have heard that H1N1 is no more dangerous than seasonal flu
- But seasonal flu kills 36,000 people a year in the U.S. alone.
- H1N1 is especially dangerous for pregnant women and young children.
- That's why you should take steps to avoid spreading it – and get vaccinated.