



September 25, 2009

Who should get tested and treated for H1N1 (“swine”) flu?

This flu season, there are **two types of flu circulating in our area**: regular seasonal flu, and novel H1N1 influenza A, otherwise known as H1N1 or “swine” flu.

Doctors in our area will not be testing most people who get flu-like illness to see which type of flu they have, because current rapid flu tests are not reliable. But some people will get tested.

Testing for flu is recommended for:

- People who have been admitted to a hospital for flu-like illness
- People who have come to their doctor’s office or other health facility because of flu-like symptoms, and who are going to be admitted immediately to the hospital
- People whose doctors are participating in efforts to monitor the flu outbreak in our area
- Some health care workers who have had flu-like illness in recent days but are feeling better, and may be able to return to work if they are no longer infected

Most people who get flu-like illness will be able to recover within a few days. They will not need the help of anti-viral medicines such as Tamiflu. However, some people need these medicines to help them fight off the flu and prevent worse problems. Doctors need to reserve these medicines for them.

Treatment with antiviral medicines is recommended for:

- Anyone who has been hospitalized for flu-like illness, or who has tested positive for H1N1 flu after being admitted to the hospital
- Children under 2, and especially children under 2, who get the flu
- People over age 65 who get the flu
- Pregnant women who get the flu
- Adults and children who have certain chronic diseases and who get the flu
The diseases are:
 - Lung disease, including asthma and emphysema
 - Heart disease and other cardiovascular conditions
 - Kidney, liver and blood diseases (including sickle cell disease)
 - Diabetes and other metabolic disorders
 - Neuromuscular and developmental disorders
- Adults and children who get the flu while they are taking medicines, such as chemotherapy, that reduce their immune system’s ability to fight off an infection
- Adults and children who get the flu and have a disease or who are on medications that reduce their immune system’s ability to fight off and infection.
- Residents of nursing homes or other chronic care facilities who have a flu
- Children and teens under 19 who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy

For individuals in the above groups, antiviral medicine can prevent life-threatening flu-related illness. You do not have to have a positive test for flu to start receiving anti-viral medicine. In fact, it’s important to start treatment with these medicines within the first day or two after flu-like symptoms begin! That’s when they work best. **If you or your child fit any of these groups, call your doctor’s office immediately about any fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills or fatigue.**

For anyone who is seriously ill, and has trouble breathing, blue or purple lips, uncontrollable vomiting, dizziness or confusion, signs of dehydration, convulsions (seizures) or lack of responsiveness, seek emergency treatment.