



WILLIAMSON COUNTY AND CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

Williamson County & Cities Health District Encourages Everyone To Help Fight Flu!

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Williamson County & Cities Health District (WCCHD) encourages everyone to take these measures to prevent the spread of flu:

- Get your seasonal flu vaccine now
- Get Novel H1N1 vaccine when available
- Stay home if you are sick
- Keep your children home if they are sick
- Practice great hand washing or use hand sanitizers
- Cover your cough with a tissue, and throw all used tissues in the trash

If you or a loved one are sick with flu or flu-like symptoms,

- **Stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone** (without the use of fever-reducing medicine). A fever is defined as having a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater.
- **Get plenty of rest;**
- **Drink clear fluids** (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from getting dehydrated (loosing too much fluid);
- **Cover coughs and sneezes;**
- **Clean hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often, especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands;
- **Avoid close contact with others**, including staying home from work or school;
- **Call your Doctor or Seek medical attention for the following:** fever of greater than 100° F for more than 3 days, your symptoms are worsening, or you have any difficulties with breathing.

If you are sick with the flu, you may be ill for a week or longer. You should stay home and keep away from others as much as possible, including avoiding travel and not going to work or school. Current recommendations are for patients to remain home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Vaccine Information

Distribution of the 2009 H1N1 (formerly known as "swine" flu) vaccine is expected to be begin in 3-6 weeks. Many physicians, pharmacies, and institutions have registered and intend to provide this vaccine. This vaccine will be sent directly to providers who have placed an order on the www.texasflu.org website and we are encouraging physicians and other providers to place an order if they have not already. Williamson County & Cities Health District will also receive a shipment of 2009 H1N1 vaccine and will prioritize to clients who are uninsured and underinsured. No shortage of 2009 H1N1 vaccine is expected, but vaccine availability and demand are unpredictable and there is some possibility that initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities in some localities. So the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) have made recommendations regarding which people should be targeted first, since this vaccine is likely to be made available incrementally in smaller quantities as it is manufactured.

Target Population for Seasonal Flu Vaccine	Target Population for H1N1 Vaccine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons aged 50 or greater; • Women who will be pregnant during influenza season; • Persons who have chronic pulmonary (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), renal, hepatic, hematological, or metabolic disorders (including diabetes); • Persons with immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV); • Persons who have conditions that can compromise respiratory function or handling of secretions or that can increase risk for aspiration; • Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities; • Healthcare personnel; • Household contacts and caregivers of children ages <5 years and adults age 50 or greater with emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children 6 months of age or less; • Household contacts and caregivers of persons with medical conditions that put them at high risk for severe complications from influenza. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated; • Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated; • Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity; • All people from 6 months through 24 years of age. Children from 6 months through 18 years of age because cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza have been seen in children as with young adults 19 through 24; • Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

Vaccine Availability

Seasonal flu vaccine is becoming increasingly available and should continue to be available through out the next several months. We encourage everyone to get vaccinated against flu each year and this year is certainly no exception. The recommendations for who should get Seasonal Flu Vaccine have not changed significantly from last year, however there are some additional groups for whom the 2009 H1N1 vaccine is recommended based on whom this strain is affecting most. Some groups, such as pregnant women, close contacts and caregivers of young children and health care personnel, are in the high risk/target groups for both vaccines this year.

Seasonal flu illness in Williamson County typically peaks between December and March. Novel H1N1 flu is currently causing high levels of mild to moderate illness in our area.

Symptoms of Flu

Again, most cases that we are seeing are moderately ill and resolve on their own. However, like seasonal flu, novel H1N1 influenza can vary in severity from mild to severe. The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of regular human seasonal flu infection. They include:

- fever,
- lethargy (lack of energy),
- lack of appetite, and
- coughing.

Some people with flu also reported:

- sore throat and runny nose,
- nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

If it is necessary for you leave the house or to seek medical care while you are sick, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. In general, you should avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness, especially people at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. With seasonal flu and H1N1 people may be contagious up to 24 hours before they develop symptoms so it is important for everyone to wash hands frequently and cover those coughs and sneezes.

Treatment for flu

In most cases it is not necessary or helpful to perform testing to determine which type of flu is causing the illness, since the treatment and symptoms are the same. Most healthy persons who develop an illness consistent with influenza, or persons who appear to be recovering from influenza, do not need antiviral (drugs that fight viruses) medications for treatment or prevention. Treatment, when indicated, should be initiated as early as possible because studies show that treatment initiated early (i.e., within 48 hours of illness onset) is more likely to provide benefit.

Current CDC guidelines for the novel H1N1 suggest that some treatment should be considered early for all hospitalized persons with suspected or confirmed influenza and for those persons suspected or confirmed influenza that are at higher risk for complications including:

- Children younger than 2 years old;
- Persons aged 65 years or older;
- Pregnant women;
- Persons of any age with certain chronic medical or immunosuppressive conditions (see page 3); and,
- Persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

To learn more about WCCHD immunization clinic hours or other available programs visit *your public health department* at www.wcchd.org.