

**FLU-LIKE ILLNESS MAKING EARLY APPEARANCE THIS FALL  
CDC Urges Parents to Know Warning Signs of Severe Illness**

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the nation is seeing an unprecedented amount of flu like illness for this time of the year. The 2009 H1N1 virus, previously called “swine flu”, has been identified as the cause in 99% of those tested. This virus has caused widespread but generally mild illness since last spring. Public health officials believe that this trend will continue. Like the seasonal flu, most people infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus are expected to recover after several days, though it is important to note that people with certain pre-existing medical conditions, infants and the elderly may be at risk for more severe illness.

Additionally, the 2009 H1N1 virus may pose a more serious risk to older children than the usual seasonal flu. Typically, there are 40 -50 flu-related deaths of children under 18 between October and April but, this year, there have been 43 in just the past seven weeks. Thus, the CDC urges parents to know the warning signs of severe illness and recommends that anyone who is seriously ill or has specific concerns should contact their healthcare provider. Health officials caution that anyone with difficulty breathing or whose illness gets worse after two or three days should seek medical attention immediately.

- **In children, signs that need urgent medical attention include:**
  - **Fast breathing or trouble breathing**
  - **Bluish skin color**
  - **Not drinking enough fluids**
  - **Not waking up or not interacting with people**
  - **Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held**

- **Flu-like symptoms improve but return with fever and worse cough**
- **Fever with a rash**
  
- **In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:**
  - **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
  - **Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen**
  - **Sudden dizziness**
  - **Confusion**
  - **Severe or persistent vomiting**

In addition to seeking medical attention when appropriate, Monique Davis, Health Educator/Risk Communicator at the Hudson Regional Health Commission, notes that hand washing, covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing, staying home when sick, and getting vaccinated all play a significant role in preventing illness. The 2009 H1N1 vaccination program has begun but there is still a limited supply of vaccine. In NJ, the vaccine will be available through a network of state-authorized providers including more than 100 in Hudson County. The providers include local health departments, community health centers, healthcare facilities, physicians' offices, and retail pharmacies. The vaccine will be free, though some providers may charge a small administration fee. Initially, individuals in the following priority groups will be targeted for vaccine:

- Pregnant women
- Persons who live with or provide care for infants younger than months
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel

- Children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications. Persons with chronic medical conditions should contact their physicians if uncertain about their risk.

People 65 and older are not included in the “high risk” groups to receive the first doses of 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccination since they are less likely to get infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus than younger people. However, people 65 and older should get the seasonal flu vaccine as soon as possible and the 2009 H1N1 vaccine after the high-risk groups have had the opportunity to be vaccinated. Additionally, older persons should seek medical treatment if they develop symptoms of the flu as they are at high risk of complications if they get sick.

“CDC indicates that eventually there will be enough vaccine available for anyone who wishes to receive it but in the interim, we ask members of the public who do not fall within the priority groups and who want to receive this vaccine to be patient. We encourage everyone to stay informed regarding the availability of H1N1 vaccine, especially parents of young children and those in high risk groups. We also urge those that become ill to contact their physician for treatment recommendations since antiviral drugs are available that may prevent serious illness”, said Davis.

For additional information about 2009 H1N1 Flu, please visit [www.nj.gov/health/flu/h1n1](http://www.nj.gov/health/flu/h1n1) or [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) or contact the NJ H1N1 Hotline at 866-321-9571 between 9AM and 5PM.

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