

Swine Flu Now a Pandemic

What does this mean?

On June 11, 2009 the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the Swine Flu, also called H1N1, worldwide pandemic alert level to Phase 6. This decision was made because Swine Flu (H1N1) cases have now spread to over 70 countries. It does not mean that the severity of illness is greater. At this time it is impossible to tell how serious it might become.

A pandemic does not mean it is time to panic. But, it does tell us that this flu virus is spreading and that we should do everything possible to stay healthy and keep from coming in contact with it. At this time there is no vaccine to protect against Swine Flu.

Read this issue of "An Apple A Day" for tips on avoiding the flu. For more information go to www.cdc.gov and follow the links for more Swine Flu updates. 



SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT THE SWINE FLU?

You may have heard someone talking about Swine Flu in the last few months. The Swine Flu, also known as the H1N1 Flu, is a virus. It mainly spreads like any other flu would spread — from person to person. There is not a vaccine available for Swine Flu yet so practicing good health habits and personal hygiene is more important than ever in preventing disease.

Swine Flu mainly spreads through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick with the virus. Practicing good personal hygiene can help keep you from getting the Swine Flu and viruses like it. And, if you are sick, it can help prevent you from making others sick. Simple steps you can take to help keep you healthy include:



- ▶ **Avoid close contact with people who are sick**
- ▶ **Wash your hands often**
- ▶ **Use alcohol-based hand wipes or gel sanitizers**
- ▶ **Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, which increases your chance of spreading germs**

PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU

Often, your best defense against getting many flu viruses is a flu shot. (Remember, at this time there is no shot available for Swine Flu.) A flu shot is approved for most people, six months of age or older. Both healthy people and those with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, and heart disease are recommended to get flu shots every year. Flu shots help build-up your body's immune system. Your immune system is what fights off germs and viruses, especially during flu season (November to April).

You can also help protect yourself from getting the flu throughout the year by practicing other healthy habits, such as:

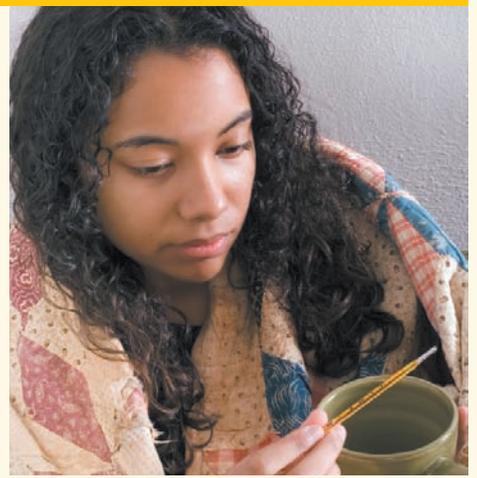
- ▶ Get plenty of sleep
- ▶ Be physically active
- ▶ Manage your stress

- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids, especially water
- ▶ Eat nutritious, well-balanced foods

When your body is infected with a flu or virus, you will generally have one or more of these common symptoms:

- ▶ Fever (usually high)
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Extreme tiredness
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Runny or stuffy nose
- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, (more common in children than adults)

Go see a doctor if any of these symptoms last for more than three days. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to help relieve many of your symptoms.



SING AWAY COLDS AND FLU

The Center for Disease Control recommends that when you are washing your hands — with soap and warm water — that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. That's about the same time it takes to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice!

Sources: www.cdc.gov

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Your Registered Nurse Care Managers are Here for You



GIVE EVERYONE A GIFT — DON'T GIVE THEM THE FLU

If you are sick with the flu, be considerate of others:

- ▶ Stay home from work, school or running errands, if possible
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing
- ▶ Throw away any used tissues or wipes
- ▶ Take medicine if your doctor recommends it
- ▶ Wash your hands often

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