

## Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

### Novel H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu): Information for Parents

#### **What is H1N1 (swine flu)?**

H1N1 is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 flu can vary in severity from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths have occurred. Pregnant women, very young children and people with chronic medical conditions, like asthma, heart disease and diabetes, are more likely to develop severe illness than the average adult. Bacterial infections at the same time or after the flu infections can lead to pneumonia, ear infections or sinus infections.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

The symptoms of H1N1 flu are similar to seasonal flu symptoms and include:

- Fever (100 degrees F or more)
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Chills
- Vomiting and diarrhea (with the respiratory symptoms)
- Cough
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Headache
- Fatigue

#### **How is it spread?**

Flu viruses spread from person to person by the coughs and sneezes of sick people. Flu viruses may also be spread when people touch something that is contaminated with the virus and then touches their eyes, noses or mouths.

#### **How do I lessen the spread of the flu?**

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after coughing or sneezing and before eating.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the inside of elbow.
- Throw used tissues in the trash.
- Stay away from people who are sick.

#### **Caring for the sick person at home:**

- Check with your medical care provider about any special care needed for a person who is pregnant or who has a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma or emphysema.
- Persons in a high risk group for complications from flu should avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with household members who are sick with flu. If close contact with the sick person is unavoidable, consider wearing a facemask, if available and tolerable.
- Avoid having pregnant women care for the sick person. (Pregnant women are at increased risk of flu-related complications and the ability to fight off infections can be lower than normal during pregnancy).
- Keep the sick person away from others as much as possible. **DO NOT GO TO WORK OR SCHOOL WHILE ILL.**

- Stay home for at least 24 hours after fever is gone, except to seek medical care (Fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medication).
- **Do not give aspirin to children or teenagers.** This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reyes syndrome. Children 5 years of age and older and teens can take medicines **without** aspirin, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin) to relieve symptoms.
- Read the label of any over-the-counter cold and flu medications to be sure they don't contain aspirin or additional doses of medications already being given such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Check with your health care provider before giving children under the age of 4 any over-the-counter cold medications.
- The safest way to help flu symptoms in children under two years of age is to use a cool-mist humidifier and a suction bulb to help clear away mucus from the nose.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink clear fluids, such as water, broth and sports drinks. Infants may drink electrolyte beverages (like Pedialyte), in addition to breast milk or formula, to keep from becoming dehydrated.
- Be watchful for emergency warning signs that might indicate the need to seek medical attention.

**When to seek emergency care:**

If a **child** experiences any of the following:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

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
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

For more detailed information about novel H1N1 home care, visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.