

In Good Health

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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE 2010-2011 FLU SEASON

***The 2010-2011 Flu Season is upon us.
We hope the following information answers your questions.***

What sort of flu season is expected this year?

Every year the flu season is unpredictable. Although epidemics of flu happen every year, the timing, severity, and length of the epidemic depends on many factors, including what flu viruses are spreading and whether they match the viruses that are contained in the vaccine. Last flu season (2009-2010) saw the emergence of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus (previously called "novel H1N1" or "swine flu"). This virus caused the first influenza pandemic (global outbreak of disease caused by a new flu virus) in more than 40 years. While not certain, it is likely that 2009 H1N1 viruses will continue to spread along with seasonal viruses in the U.S. during the 2010-2011 flu season.

Will new strains of flu circulate this season?

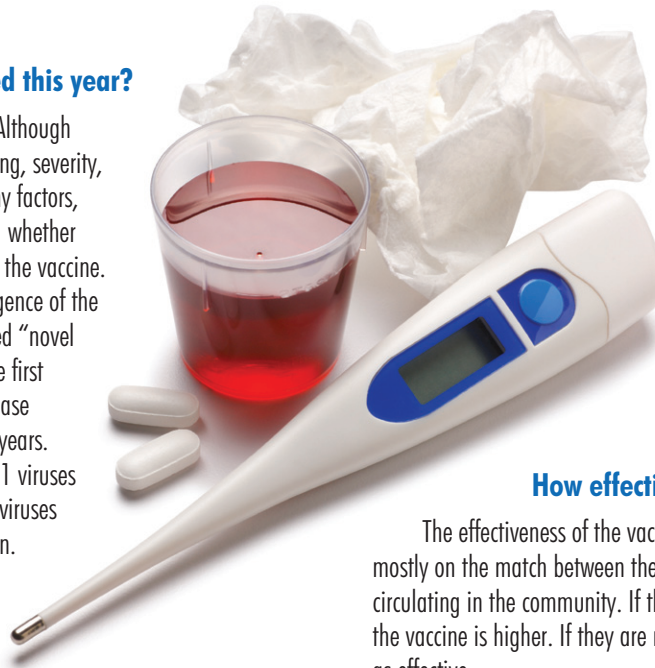
Flu viruses are constantly changing so it's not unusual for new flu virus strains to appear each year. While not certain, it is suspected that 2009 H1N1 virus and seasonal viruses will be the cause of illness during the 2010-2011 flu season.

When will flu activity begin and when will it peak?

The timing of flu is very unpredictable and can vary from season to season. Flu activity most commonly peaks in the U.S. in January or February. However, seasonal flu activity can occur as late as May and as early as October.

What should I do to prepare for this flu season?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone as the first and most important step in protecting the flu. While there are many different flu viruses, the flu vaccine is designed to protect against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most



illness during the flu season. The 2010-2011 flu vaccine will protect against three different flu viruses: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 virus that caused so much illness last season. All will be combined in one shot. Getting the flu vaccine soon after it becomes available each year is always a good idea, and the protection you get from vaccination will last throughout the flu season.

How effective is the flu vaccine?

The effectiveness of the vaccine can vary from year to year and depends mostly on the match between the viruses in the vaccine and flu viruses that are circulating in the community. If these are closely matched, the effectiveness of the vaccine is higher. If they are not closely matched, the flu shot may not be as effective.

What actions can I take to protect myself and my family against the flu this season?

CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against the flu.

In addition, you can take steps like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading influenza to others.

Is there treatment for the flu?

If you get sick, there are drugs that can treat flu illness. They are called antiviral drugs and they can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. If you think you have the flu, call your doctor's office for guidance.

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