

It's FLU SEASON

I encourage people to receive their flu vaccination to protect themselves against the flu," said **David Snyderman, MD, Chief of the Division of Geographic Medicine and Infectious Diseases.** "People should also remember to wash and sanitize their hands as often as possible."



This flu season may prove to be a very challenging one, dealing with both the seasonal flu and H1N1 flu. This year the flu season will come earlier, due to the novel H1N1 virus (swine flu) that began circulating last spring.

How do people get the flu?

Flu spreads from person to person via droplet transmission. When someone infected with the flu virus coughs or sneezes, the virus may come out of the nose or mouth. Droplets of the flu virus may be on objects such as a telephone, doorknob, handrail or children's toys. If you come in contact with these objects, the virus could transfer from the object to your hands and from your hands to your nose, eyes or mouth.

How will I know whether I have the flu or a cold?

WITH A COLD:	WITH THE FLU:
You almost never have a fever	You have a fever
You feel stuffiness in your head	Your entire body feels sick
You feel a little sick	You feel very sick

What is influenza?

Influenza (often called "flu") is a contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. Symptoms include sudden fever, cough, muscle aches, headache, runny nose, sore throat and general weakness. Flu may also cause diarrhea and vomiting in some people. These symptoms can range from mild to severe.

What is 2009 H1N1 flu?

2009 H1N1 flu, known as "swine flu" early on, is a new strain of flu virus. 2009 H1N1 flu is spread the same way, causes the same symptoms and is treated the same way as seasonal flu. The main difference between seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 flu is that most people do not have immunity or protection against 2009 H1N1 since this is a new strain of flu. Since few people have protection against 2009 H1N1 flu, more people could become sick with this type of flu.

What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms include fever (>100.4F), with any one of the following:

- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Muscle aches
- ▶ Runny/stuffy nose
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Malaise

How is the flu treated?

Most cases of seasonal or novel H1N1 influenza require only supportive care, such as resting at home, drinking plenty of fluids, and fever/pain reducers (do not use products containing aspirin if you are less than 19 years of age). Contact a health care provider if symptoms initially improve, then seem to get worse, or if there is difficulty breathing, inability to keep liquids down, etc.

How can you protect yourself against the flu?

- ▶ Get immunized against both seasonal and novel H1N1 influenza.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your inner elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- ▶ Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Limit your contact with sick persons, and stay home if you are sick.

For more information about the seasonal flu and updates on the H1N1 virus you can visit the following websites:

- **Boston Public Health Commission:** www.bphc.org/flu
- **Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH):** www.mass.gov/dph/flu
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** www.cdc.gov/flu