

Staying Healthy During Flu Season

The single best way to prevent 2009 H1N1 influenza is to get vaccinated; however, until supplies reach a level at which all Harrison County residents may receive an H1N1 vaccination, it is especially important for those not in the vaccination priority groups to take other actions to stay healthy.

“Surveillance has shown that individuals age 65 and older are at a lower risk for contracting H1N1; that’s why they are not in the targeted priority group for H1N1 vaccination,” said Harrison County Home and Public Health’s Nicole Carritt. “However, although they are less likely to get H1N1 flu, they are more likely to have complications if they do become ill.” This is why older individuals should take special care to fight the flu and see a doctor if they become ill.

All Harrison County residents should take personal action to stay healthy during the flu season, which is expected to last at least through March. Remember the three Cs: Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow; Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer; and Contain germs by staying home when sick.

Most people have been able to recover from the 2009 H1N1 flu at home without needing medical care; however, antiviral drugs can be used for people who are sick with flu-like symptoms and are at increased risk of serious flu complications, including pregnant women, young children, people 65 and older, and people with chronic health conditions. For treatment, antiviral drugs work best if started within the first two days of symptoms. Flu-like symptoms include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches and headache
- Chills
- Fatigue

Antiviral drugs are not sold over-the-counter and are different from antibiotics. They are prescription medicines that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. Antiviral drugs can make illness milder, shorten the time you are sick, and may also prevent serious flu complications.

A statewide toll-free hotline has been established for public questions about seasonal and H1N1 influenza at 1-800-447-1985. More information can also be found at www.idph.state.ia.us or by calling Harrison County Home and Public Health at 712-644-2220.

Harrison County Home and Public Health still has seasonal flu vaccine available for all age groups, including individuals over 65 years of age. We will also be continuing to hold regular H1N1 clinics throughout the winter months. Please call the office if you would like to schedule a seasonal flu shot or if you have any questions regarding vaccinations or clinic dates and times.

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