

# Flu: what you need to know

Important information about flu symptoms, testing, medical treatments, home treatments and high-risk indicators.

Everyone has heard the news and discussions about the H1N1 virus that is becoming more and more prevalent. However, although there are some concerns for individuals with pre-existing medical conditions such as pregnancy, asthma, diabetes, heart or lung disease, or other conditions that weaken the immune system, most individuals will recover from the flu with some common sense home treatment and rest. We therefore advise that before you rush into the doctor's office or Emergency Room and wait needlessly in a crowded waiting room, you may want to utilize the "FLU ELEVATOR" at [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) to do a self-evaluation, gain valuable information, and make informed decisions that will help you and your family make solid health decisions during this unusual flu season.

## FLU SYMPTOMS CAN INCLUDE:

Fever ▪ Cough ▪ Congestion ▪ Fatigue  
Sore Throat ▪ Body Aches ▪ Headache  
Vomiting ▪ Chills ▪ Diarrhea

Symptoms of the H1N1 "swine" flu include fever, body aches, nausea, runny nose and coughing. If you are experiencing mild symptoms, you should stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. Influenza is thought to spread mainly through the coughing or sneezing of infected people.

Holy Rosary Medical Center encourages everyone to use soap and water or a waterless hand hygiene solution to wash hands frequently; keep hands away from nose, eyes and mouth; and cough away from others and into a disposable tissue. If you cough or sneeze into your hands, make sure to wash them.

## TESTING:

According to the Center for Disease Control, it isn't necessary or feasible to test every person with influenza-like illness for H1N1 (formerly called the swine flu). Most people recover from the flu without needing medical treatment.

**People with flu-like symptoms who are not at high risk for influenza complications do NOT need to be seen by a doctor and do NOT need to be tested for H1N1.** Doctors may decide to test specific individuals based on their evaluation of that person's particular illness.

## MEDICAL TREATMENT:

At Holy Rosary Medical Center, we are following recommendations from the CDC and the Health Department regarding testing and treatment for influenza.

Treatment for influenza is recommended only for patients who fall into the “high-risk” category.

**Those high-risk groups are:**

- People hospitalized with confirmed, probable or suspected H1N1 flu.
- Children younger than 5 years old.
- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Persons with the following conditions:
  - Chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, renal, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders
  - Immunosuppression, including that caused by medication or HIV
  - Pregnant women
  - Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities.

We are happy to evaluate you for other illnesses and to recommend treatment for your symptoms if Tylenol, Motrin and over-the-counter remedies are not working.

**HOME TREATMENT:**

Most people recover from the flu without needing medical treatment. You’ll feel sick for 7-10 days. Please stay home—you’ll feel better and you won’t infect your friends, co-workers or fellow students. During that time, you should get plenty of rest and drink lots of clear fluids (water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from becoming dehydrated. Be sure to cover coughs and sneezes.

As indicated on the CDC website, “you should take medications as needed for fever and pain. These include acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®, Nuprin®), and cough medicine. Carefully follow the dosing instructions on the labels. These medicines do not need to be taken regularly if your symptoms improve.”

Additionally, the Center for Disease Control instructs:

- You should not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) or products containing aspirin (e.g. Pepto Bismol®) to children younger than 19 years of age.
- You should not give children younger than 4 years of age any over-the-counter cold medications without first speaking with a health care provider.”
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then dispose of the tissue immediately in the trash, or cough and sneeze into the crook of your elbow.
- Throw away tissues and disposable items used by the sick person in the trash. Wash your hands after touching used tissues and similar waste.
- Have everyone in the household wash hands often with soap and water, particularly after coughing and sneezing, or use alcohol-based sanitizing cleaners.
- If you are sick and sharing a common space in your home, wear a facemask to help prevent spreading the virus to others.
- Keep sick children under care at home when you go to the store or out in the public
- And finally, now more than ever, it is very important to eat a balanced diet and get plenty of sleep.

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For additional information about the H1N1 Flu virus pertinent to our area, please visit the Malheur County Health Department website at: <http://health.malheurco.org/home>