METRO HEALTH
SAN ANTONIO'S PUBLIC HEALTH TEAM

Novel H1N1 Influenza Information for Diabetics

What is novel H1N1 influenza?
Novel H1N1 is a new influenza (flu) virus spreading from person to person in the same way as seasonal flu. This is mainly through coughing or sneezing by a person with influenza or when an individual touches a surface or object with flu viruses, then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes.

What are the signs and symptoms of novel H1N1 flu?
The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

How can you protect yourself from the novel H1N1 flu and seasonal flu?

- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue or use sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Immediately throw away the tissue.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water. If unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Take time to get vaccinated against influenza. The CDC recommends seasonal influenza vaccine annually to all persons with diabetes six months of age and older and influenza vaccination for close household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of anyone with diabetes.
    - Getting a seasonal flu vaccination is part of an overall diabetes management plan. CDC recommends that you get your seasonal flu vaccination now. Limited supplies of the vaccine are available at this time. Use www.flucliniclocator.org to locate seasonal flu vaccine providers.

If I have diabetes am I at high risk of flu complications?
Influenza can interfere with efforts to control blood sugar levels, putting those with diabetes at increased risk of high or low blood sugar, and those with type 1 diabetes, in particular, at an increased risk of diabetic coma.

People with diabetes are six times more likely to be hospitalized with influenza complications and almost three times more likely to die from influenza. More than 10% of deaths related to influenza and pneumonia are attributed to diabetes.

About 70% of people who have been hospitalized with the novel H1N1 virus have one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at "high risk" of serious seasonal flu-related complications-- pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

Are there other people at high risk for complications of influenza?
Those at high risk for complications include:

- Children younger than 5 years of age (severe complications are higher among those younger than 2 years).
- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Persons with the following conditions:

  Pregnancy • Cancer • Blood disorders (including sickle cell disease) • Chronic lung disease [including asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)] • **Diabetes** • Heart disease • Kidney disorders • Liver disorders • Neurological disorders (including nervous system, brain or spinal cord) • Neuromuscular disorders (including muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis) • People with weakened immune systems (including people with AIDS)
- Persons younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

Who should get the novel H1N1 flu vaccine?
People who are at high risk for complications from influenza should be protected from infection. Priority groups are encouraged to get vaccinated against novel H1N1 flu once the vaccine is available. Priority vaccination groups include:

- Pregnant women.
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age.
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel.
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age.
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

Which flu vaccine should diabetics receive?
People who have diabetes should receive the injected (inactive) vaccination, NOT the live attenuated nasal mist vaccination for either novel H1N1 or seasonal flu.

Can one receive seasonal flu and the novel H1N1 vaccine at the same time?
People can receive both the injected seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines at the same time and both vaccines are recommended. Simultaneous administration of inactivated vaccines is permissible if different anatomic sites are used. LAIV (Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine) seasonal or novel H1N1 is NOT recommended for persons with diabetes.

Can contacts of people with diabetes get the nasal-spray flu vaccine?
People who are in contact with others with severely weakened immune systems when they are being cared for in a protective environment (for example, people with hematopoietic stem cell transplants), should not get the nasal spray vaccine, including the novel H1N1 nasal spray vaccine if they will come into contact with the severely immuno-compromised person within 7 days of vaccination. **People who have contact with others with lesser degrees of immuno-suppression (for example, people with diabetes, people with asthma taking corticosteroids, or people infected with HIV) can get the nasal spray vaccine.**

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe for diabetics?
Influenza vaccination is the most effective intervention for reducing the impact of influenza. Studies have shown influenza vaccination is associated with a 72% reduction in hospitalizations and death in persons with diabetes 18 to 64 years.

CDC experts expect the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine to have a similar safety profile as seasonal flu vaccines, which have a very good safety track record. Any serious side effects following vaccination with the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine would be rare. If side effects occur, they will likely be similar to those experienced following seasonal influenza vaccine.

The CDC and FDA closely monitor the safety of seasonal influenza and other vaccines licensed for use in the United States in cooperation with state and local health departments, healthcare providers, and other partners.

A pneumonia (pneumococcal) vaccine should also be part of a diabetes management plan. Check with your health care provider to see if this is recommended for you.

Are there medicines to treat novel H1N1 infection?
Individuals considered **high risk** who become symptomatic should seek medical care through their healthcare provider. CDC recommends the use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) or zanamivir (Relenza) for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with novel H1N1 flu virus. Antiviral drugs are prescription medicines (pills, liquid or an inhaled powder) that fight against the flu by keeping flu viruses from reproducing in your body. If you get sick, antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. They may also prevent serious flu complications.

During the current pandemic, the priority use for influenza antiviral drugs is to treat severe influenza illness (for example hospitalized patients) and people who are sick who have a condition that places them at high risk for serious flu-related complications (including people with diabetes).

What other steps can I take to monitor and protect my health?
First and foremost, follow your health care provider's guidance. You can also keep these recommendations in mind and discuss them with your provider:

- Illnesses like the flu can lead to high blood sugars. Be sure to keep taking you diabetes pills or insulin. Don't stop taking them even if you can't eat. Your health care provider may advise you to take more insulin during sickness.

- Take your usual dose of pills or insulin as close as possible to the same time as usual.

- If you can't eat your usual diet, eat enough soft foods or drink enough liquids to take the place of the fruits and starchy foods you usually eat.

- Drink extra calorie-free liquids, like water, diet soda or tea, 4-6 ounces every hour in small sips.

- Check your temperature every 4 hours. If your temperature is over 101˚ F, call your health care provider for advice.

- Check your urine for ketones.

- If you have moderate or large amounts of ketones in your urine and your blood glucose is 300mg/dl or higher, call your health care provider or go to an emergency room.

- Make a plan. Be prepared in case you get sick and need to stay home for a week or so; a supply of over-the-counter medicines, diabetes meds and supplies alcohol-based hand rubs, tissues and other related items might could be useful and help avoid the need to make trips out in public while you are sick and contagious

Where can people get the novel H1N1 flu vaccine?

Healthcare providers registered to receive the novel H1N1 flu vaccine to give to patients. Those who registered for the vaccine will receive it in multiple shipments over the coming months. Once an adequate supply becomes available, Metro Health and University Health System will be offering the vaccine, as well as many other health systems, clinics, private physician offices, and school districts. People should first contact their own healthcare provider to try to obtain the vaccine. They may also check with other clinics and health systems, and call the Metro Health Flu Hotline for information and updates: 210-207-5779.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.flu.gov, and the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District.