

## Flu (Influenza) Information

The flu is a contagious (spreads easily between people) illness caused by small germs called viruses. There are many different flu viruses and the virus often may change from year to year. Last year the H1N1 or swine flu was the most widespread virus. The H1N1 virus was a new flu virus.

Every year, about 200,000 people have to stay in the hospital when they come down with seasonal flu. Flu can be more severe in the very young, the elderly, pregnant women and people with chronic illnesses.

NOTE: You can call the INFORMATION LINE for the latest updates on the Seasonal FLU Vaccine. The number is 518-565-4490. Choose option 1 (Immunizations) and then select option 3 (For 2009 Seasonal Flu Clinic Schedule)

### How Does it Spread?

The flu is spread mainly by droplets made when people with the flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, eyes or nose.

### What are the Symptoms?

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms. People often relate to having the flu as being “hit by a truck”.

fever\* or feeling feverish/chills

cough

sore throat

runny or stuffy nose

muscle or body aches

headaches

fatigue (very tired)

Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

\* not everyone with flu will have a fever.

## Can I Give the Flu to Other People?

You may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms start and up to 5-7 days after becoming sick. Children and people with a weakened immune system might be able to infect others for even a longer time.

## How can I Protect Myself and those I Love from the Flu?

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season. There are two types of flu vaccines:

The "flu shot" contains an inactivated (killed) virus. The seasonal flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older.

The nasal-spray flu vaccine –a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu. It is given by spraying a small amount of mist in the nose. Vaccination with the nasal-spray flu vaccine is for healthy\* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. Even people who live with or care for those in a high risk group (including health care workers) can get the nasal-spray flu vaccine as long as they are healthy themselves and are not pregnant. The one exception is health care workers who care for people with severely weakened immune systems who require a protected hospital environment; these people should get the inactivated flu vaccine (flu shot).

## Can I get the flu from the flu vaccine?

No, vaccines are made with killed virus or weakened virus. Some people may get a mild sore arm, minor aching, and runny nose or feel a little tired for a day or so. This is the body's way of building protection against the flu.

## When to Be Vaccinated Against Seasonal Flu

Timing and the duration of the flu season may vary from year to year. While flu season can begin as early as October, flu illness usually begins to strike Clinton County in January and continues into the early spring. Due to that fact, we begin our flu vaccine program in October to make sure our residents are protected throughout the entire flu season.

## Ways to Help Avoid Getting the Flu

Important ways to avoid both seasonal and H1N1 flu and prevent its spread are frequent hand washing, use of alcohol based hand sanitizers, coughing or sneezing into one's sleeve, keeping at least six feet distance from people who have respiratory symptoms, and staying home when you are sick.

## Who Should be Vaccinated?

"Universal" flu vaccination is now encouraged for anyone over 6 months of age. While everyone should get a flu vaccine each flu season, it is especially important that certain people are vaccinated either because they are at high risk of having serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for people at high risk for developing flu-related complications.

Children younger than 5, but especially children 6 months to 2 years

Adults 65 years of age and older

Pregnant women

**\*\*NOTE:** *Children less than 3 years of age and women who know that they are pregnant, can not receive flu vaccine that contains more than trace amounts of the preservative thimerosal.*

“High risk” are those who have medical conditions such as:

Asthma (even if mild)

Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury].

Chronic lung disease (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)

Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)

Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)

Endocrine disorders such as diabetes

Kidney disorders

Liver disorders

Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)

Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)

People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy

People who are morbidly obese (Body Mass Index [BMI] of 40 or greater)

## Who Else Should get Vaccinated?

Other people for whom vaccination is especially important are:

People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

Health care workers

Persons living in a home with someone who has medical conditions.

Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years of age. Remember children younger than 6 months are at highest risk of flu-related complications but are too young to get vaccinated. We must get vaccinated to protect them.

## Who Should NOT be Vaccinated Against Seasonal Flu

People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.

People who have had a severe reaction to a flu vaccination in the past.

People who have had Guillian-Barré syndrome ( a rare neuromuscular disease)

Children younger than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group).

People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

## Contact Us

To receive more information, call or visit us at:

Clinton County Health Department  
Health Services Unit  
133 Margaret Street  
Plattsburgh, NY 12901  
Tel: (518) 565-4848