

Preparing for the Flu Season

The H1N1 Influenza virus has continued to circulate about this summer but most cases of illness have been mild. Children, adolescents, young adults, and pregnant women appear to be at increase risk for becoming ill from the virus. In Minnesota, the median age of patients hospitalized with the H1N1 Influenza is 12 years of age. There continues to be the potential for this virus to change and become more severe.

In order to reduce the spread of this illness and seasonal flu there are 4 important actions we can all take:

- Wash your hands frequently, especially after coughing/sneezing, shaking hands, and before eating. Hand gels with alcohol can be used if soap and water are not available and the hands have no visible dirt on them.
- Cover your cough and sneezing with a tissue. Throw the tissue away and wash your hands. If no tissue is available then cover your nose and mouth with your sleeve as you cough or sneeze.
- Stay home from work or school if you are ill with flu symptoms (fever and cough and/or sore throat). Remain at home until 24 hours after your fever is gone without fever reducing medicine.
- Get your flu shots. Seasonal flu vaccinations are now available. We can be carriers of the flu virus without being ill. H1N1 vaccine is a federally owned vaccine so there will be no charge for the vaccine but there may be an administration fee. This vaccine will be coming later this fall.

If you have children in daycare or school, please plan now for who will care for them should they become ill. Daycares and schools will be monitoring children for illness and sending them home at the first signs of fever or illness. Remember they need to stay home when they are ill, this may be difficult for teenagers as they want to be with friends and not miss their activities. As parent you will need to be firm on this issue.

If you become severely ill with the flu, contact your medical provider, but take steps to avoid exposing others to the flu.

- Call first to see if you need to actually see your provider.
- If you do need to see your provider, they will let you know which entrance to use.

For more information or to stay current with the flu situation you may visit these websites:

www.countrysidepublichealth.org

www.health.state.mn.us Click on H1N1 Novel Influenza Information

www.flu.gov

or you may contact your local Countryside Public Health Office

- Big Stone 320-839-6135
- Chippewa 320-269-2174
- Lac qui Parle 320-598-7313
- Swift 320-843-4546
- Yellow Medicine 320-564-3010