

If you have HIV/AIDS, you may be wondering if you are at risk of serious illness from H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu). In the past, people with HIV/AIDS have not seemed more likely to get seasonal flu than other people. However, HIV-infected people, and especially persons with low CD4 cell counts or AIDS, can have more severe complications from seasonal flu. It is possible that HIV-infected people could also have more serious complications from infection with H1N1 flu.

For the best protection – get vaccinated

Those with HIV/AIDS will be among the first people able to get the H1N1 flu vaccine. Talk to your doctor about getting this new vaccine just as soon as it is available. Also, be sure to get vaccinated against seasonal flu. Seasonal flu can cause severe complications for people with HIV/AIDS.

Take these everyday steps

There are many things you, your family and friends can do to help prevent the spread of germs and reduce the chances of getting seasonal flu and H1N1 flu.

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water – or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue (or the crook of your elbow).
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people and stay home when you are sick.

Stay Healthy

Eat right, get enough sleep, and reduce stress as much as possible. Staying healthy reduces your risk of getting the flu and other infections, and helps your immune system fight off the flu if you do get it.

If you are currently taking antiretrovirals or treatment to prevent opportunistic infections, be sure to continue your prescribed treatment and follow the advice of your health care provider to keep your immune system as healthy as possible.

If you have a household member or close contact with someone who has the flu or flu-like symptoms check with your health care provider to see if you should take antiviral medications to prevent the flu.

Watch for flu symptoms

Symptoms of the H1N1 flu are like those of seasonal flu, and include: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headaches, chills and fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting. If you think you may have the H1N1 flu, do the same as you would for routine seasonal flu – contact your doctor right away for guidance. Your doctor will decide if testing or treatment is needed.

For more information, go to www.nyhealth.gov and www.flu.gov.
Check with your doctor if you have specific questions or concerns