

St. Joseph County Health Department

H1N1 Frequently Asked Questions & Talking Points

1. How is this flu season shaping up compared to last year?

- Flu Activity continues to increase in St. Joseph County, Indiana, & Nation and is higher than what is expected this time of year and is expected to continue to increase throughout the fall and winter months.
- The majority of cases experience mild illness that is not worse than what we see with seasonal influenza every year.
- Seems to mostly affect our younger populations. Average age of reported cases in SJC from August-October is 19 years (which is lower than previous flu seasons).

2. Are schools seeing a lot of absences because of the flu?

- Some schools have reported increase absenteeism rates; however the impact of illness has not yet interfered with their ability to function.
- School Closure is not advised for confirmed, or suspected cases of H1N1 unless the absenteeism and illness rate affects the school's ability to function.

3. What should people know about the recently reported H1N1 related death in a St. Joseph County Resident?

- Preliminary lab reports confirmed the presence of novel H1N1 flu in the St. Joseph County resident at the time of death. While likely due to flu related complications, the exact cause of death is still under investigation.
- The majority of H1N1 cases have created mild illness that is not more severe than what we see with seasonal flu.
- Rapid onset of flu-like symptoms leading to death is possible, however is rare in previously healthy individuals.
- Deaths related to seasonal influenza occur every year.
- Majority of influenza associated deaths (about 70%) are in individuals with underlying health conditions.
- Our hearts go out to the family in the recent case, but would like reiterate the need for prevention measures to help limit the spread of the flu, including seasonal and H1N1 vaccination.

4. What can people do to stay healthy/keep their children healthy?

- Promote healthy habits by utilizing the 3 C's: Clean hands often, cover coughs and sneezes in your sleeve, contain illness by staying home and staying away from others who are ill.
- Encourage other healthy habits such as getting plenty of sleep, eating nutritious foods, and drinking plenty of fluids.

5. What can people do to prepare for the flu season?

- Remain calm and informed.
- Promote prevention methods to keep yourself/family healthy.
- Take time to get a flu vaccine (seasonal and H1N1 as available & indicated)

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- Observe yourself and family members for signs and symptoms of the flu (fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, diarrhea, vomiting) and stay home/limit contact with others if experiencing symptoms.
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that people NOT go to hospital emergency rooms, walk-in clinics or doctors' offices, unless they have high fever, dehydration, fast or difficulty breathing, severe or persistent vomiting, children that don't wake up or interact, or symptoms that seemed to get better, got worse.
- Seek immediate medical care if you or your child experiences fast or difficulty breathing, bluish or gray skin color, dehydration, severe or persistent vomiting, children don't wake up or interact, or flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

6. When and where can people get the seasonal flu and/or the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine or shot?

- **Seasonal Flu:**
- SJCHD is currently out of seasonal flu vaccine, many local providers and pharmacies may still have it available. Call 211 for seasonal flu shot availability.
- All residents aged 6 months and older are encouraged to get vaccinated for seasonal flu as soon as possible.
- **H1N1 Vaccine:**
- St. Joseph County received the first shipment of the H1N1 Flu Mist, which is only indicated for healthy-non-pregnant individuals aged 2-49 years; however we are targeting this first round of vaccine to the following groups:
 - People from 2 through 24 years of age,
 - People from 25 through 49 years of age and live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age,
 - Health care or emergency medical personnel.
- H1N1 Flu Mist vaccine has been distributed to some providers throughout the community and is available at the SJCHD. Please call your provider for availability or call the SJCHD if you fall within these groups.
- As additional doses become available, the SJCHD will be getting vaccine to additional providers, and to our local Colleges & Universities. We will also be scheduling after hour clinics for Health Care/EMS personnel, conducting targeted clinics to reach our underserved populations that are included in the CDC's 5 target groups, and working with our local schools.
- The exact dates and times are not yet established since we do not know exactly how much vaccine we will get and when. This information will be communicated as available.
- As more vaccine becomes available, we will be able to provide it to additional locations and offer it to the other target groups identified.

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- Once target groups have been vaccinated and there is enough vaccine, efforts will be initiated to vaccinate all county residents.

7. Who should not get the flu vaccine (seasonal or H1N1)?

- You should not get any kind of flu shot if you have a severe (life threatening) egg allergy, severe reaction to previous dose of vaccine, or if you are moderately or severely ill.

8. Where can I get more information?

- Call United Way 2-1-1
- Call the Indiana State Department of Health toll free hotline 1-877-826-0011 or TTY 1-888-561-0044. Available from 8:30 am to 4:45 pm, Monday thru Friday.
- St. Joseph County Pandemic Influenza Working Group: www.nd.edu/~pandflu
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU
- Indiana State Department of Health: www.in.gov/isdh