

What You Can Do About the Flu

A Guide for UW–Milwaukee Students

Novel H1N1 influenza (a.k.a. “swine flu”) first appeared in the U.S. last spring and continued to infect people throughout the summer. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), this new strain of influenza seems to be particularly infectious to people between ages 5 and 24, so all college campuses must prepare for the possibility that a lot more people than usual could get sick this year. Please help protect your own health and that of your campus community by learning what precautions you can take to lower the risk of spreading or contracting influenza and making a Personal Influenza Plan just in case you do get sick. For more information, go to www.flu.uwm.edu

Precautions and Planning

Get your own thermometer, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and tissues.

Maintain your own supply of hand soap and/or gel hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol content). These items are available at your local pharmacy and, on a limited basis, at the Bookstore, Union Station, Sandburg Emporium, and Riverview.

Bookmark www.flu.uwm.edu and surf there regularly. The only thing we can be certain of is that the situation will change throughout the semester. Because we can’t predict exactly how, please keep checking in.

Make a Personal Influenza Plan. Do you have any health condition that might put you at higher risk for more severe illness (see high-risk list below)? Where will you recuperate if you get sick? If you live alone, who will help if you need groceries or other supplies brought to you? Where do you keep the contact info for everyone you should alert if you have to self-isolate (instructors, employer, etc.)? Use the information on this sheet to help you think through your plan.

“High-risk” medical conditions are defined as: asthma or other chronic lung disease; cancer; heart disease; diabetes; pregnancy; weakened immune system; or kidney, liver, blood, or neurological disorders. “High-risk” doesn’t mean you’re at higher risk of contracting influenza. But these conditions are associated with a higher possibility of complications if you do get flu. For more information on higher-risk medical conditions, see http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/2009-10/pdf/certain_medical.pdf

Don't spread or fall for rumors! When it comes to a potential disruption of campus operations, the official information will be posted online at emergency.uwm.edu and sent in an e-mail that comes directly from UWM. An UWM e-mail will contain this information – “All students”, “uwm-students@uwm.edu”, and/or “uwm-students-bounces@uwm.edu” – in the “from”, “sender” or “sent by” line of the e-mail. If your class is temporarily canceled, you will be notified by your instructor or department.

Start a good hand washing habit. Always wash with soap or hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds before eating, drinking, or preparing food; after using the bathroom; and if you cough or sneeze into a tissue.

Practice coughing and sneezing into tissues or your sleeve. Viruses can't stay viable as long or spread as easily from there as they can from your hands.

Try to keep hands away from eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash hands more often if you smoke or bite your nails.

When seasonal flu shots are offered, get one (cost: \$10 at campus clinics).

When H1N1 flu shots are offered, get them (anticipated cost: \$0 at campus clinics if vaccine supply is made available through the state).

If you are in close contact with someone who has the flu, don't panic, and don't blame. Influenza may be very common on campus this fall, and people may get sick despite their best efforts. Most students will *not* need to take any special actions based on ordinary exposure. Students with “high-risk” conditions, however, should call their healthcare providers promptly, as medication may be recommended in some cases to prevent influenza. Norris Health Center General H1N1 Questions: 414-229-6668/if symptoms call 414-229-4716

Cold vs.	Flu
comes on gradually	comes on quickly
fever unlikely	fever probable
cough possible	dry cough possible
Sore throat possible	sore throat possible
stomach feels okay	vomiting, diarrhea possible
body aches unlikely	body aches possible
chills unlikely	chills possible
stuffy/runny nose possible	stuffy/runny nose possible

If You Do Get Sick...

Activate the Personal Influenza Plan you made at the beginning of the semester.

Take your temperature. If you have a fever (100°F/37.8°C or higher), you *must* stay home from work and class until you have been completely fever-free (without fever-reducing medication) for at least 24 hours, and you feel well. For most people, this will be 3 to 5 days.

If you have a high-risk medical condition (listed on preceding page), call your health care provider. Although antiviral medications are not recommended for most healthy individuals, they are recommended for some high-risk cases and should be taken as soon as possible, generally within the first 24 hours of illness.

Most people recover fully on their own without medical treatment. Drink fluids to stay hydrated, get plenty of rest, eat what you can, and use ibuprofen and acetaminophen, as directed, to manage fever and body aches. (Antibiotics do not have any effect because influenza is caused by a virus.) Call a healthcare provider if your symptoms are not improving after 3 to 4 days.

Seek immediate medical attention if you develop any of the following:
shortness of breath or trouble breathing
pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
severe or persistent vomiting
confusion or sudden dizziness
flu symptoms that improve but then return suddenly with fever and worse cough

Go to your recuperation location. People with flu generally feel weak, achy, and fatigued for a few days to a week. Some people will be able to go to a nearby relative's home to recuperate. This is strongly recommended for students living in University Housing; if it is possible for you to relocate without using public transportation, please do so. If you will be staying in a household you share with others, avoid sharing common spaces with them while you're sick. If you live alone, call a friend to bring supplies to your door rather than going shopping.

Try to stay in one room with the door closed. If someone is helping care for you, make sure that person does not have a "high-risk" condition, and always wear a surgical mask or bandanna over your face while that person is in the room with you. If possible, use a separate bathroom while you are sick. Whenever you leave your room, use hand sanitizer before exiting, and keep your mouth covered until you are back in your room. Everyone in the household should wash their hands well and often and use disposable disinfectant wipes on high-touch shared surfaces, such as

doorknobs, bathroom faucets, and refrigerator handles. (See H1N1 Questions and Answers on Contamination and Cleaning, available at www.flu.uwm.edu)

Communicate. Cancel any appointments (with your advisor, dentist, etc.), and contact your professors, TAs, and employer to let them know you have influenza symptoms and cannot return to class or at work until you're better (including fever-free). As with any illness, you will be responsible for getting class notes you have missed and making arrangements to make up work after you recover. All faculty are being alerted that students are supposed to stay home if they are sick; and they are being asked to stay home from teaching if they get the flu.

Tell your "close contacts" you may have flu. That means roommates/housemates and officemates. Also, any friends, lab partners, etc., that you spent time with in the 24 hours before you started to feel sick. That way, if any of them has a "high-risk" health condition, they can contact their health provider for advice and possibly medication.

Self-Isolate. While you are self-isolating, you should not go to the library, the Union, restaurants, or any social events, and you should avoid public transportation. If you go out, cover your nose and mouth with a surgical mask, bandanna, or tissues; and shield others from coughs and sneezes.

Flu viruses typically survive on surfaces for 2 to 8 hours, so do not share towels, clothing, eating utensils, keyboards, remote controls, etc., while you are infectious. Standard disinfectant cleaning products should be sufficient to remove virus from surfaces, but water alone is not enough.

If possible, use a separate bathroom while you are sick. When you recover, wash your own sheets and towels. Empty your wastebasket of used tissues, etc., and take out the trash yourself.

The good news? If the thing that made you sick was H1N1, you can't get it again. But you can still catch colds, seasonal influenza, and other flu-like illnesses, so keep up the hand washing! Because you won't necessarily know which virus made you sick, seasonal and H1N1 vaccination are still recommended.

Adapted from What You Can Do For the Flu – A Guide for UW-Madison Students
Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), advice current as of September 3, 2009