

# An Important Health Message from Gordon Hospital Regarding the Flu



## Cases of the flu are popping up earlier than expected.

Here at Gordon Hospital, we know that this flu season will greatly effect our community and felt it important to provide you with the same information that we are getting from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) so that you and your family can be prepared in case you become sick.

### What is H1N1?

Although dubbed the "swine flu" when it initially appeared in April 2009, the virus is now referred to as the novel H1N1 virus. Although most people who have been sick with the H1N1 virus recover without needing medical treatment, others have developed more serious complications and deaths have resulted.

### Stay Calm if You Become Sick

The first and most important thing to remember is that if you or a member of your family becomes sick with what you suspect is the flu, remain calm. According to reports in the Associated Press and by the CDC, H1N1 doesn't seem more deadly than regular seasonal flu, which kills 36,000 Americans a year and hospitalizes nearly 200,000. But H1N1 flu does sicken more children than traditional flu and it spreads very easily.

Most cases of the seasonal and H1N1 or swine flu have been mild. However, some individuals fall into one of the following high risk groups:

- Healthcare workers
- Pregnant women
- Children and adults under the age of 24
- People who have chronic health conditions such as diabetes and asthma
- People caring for infants less than six months old

If you are a member of this high risk group, then you need to make sure to take extra precautions to avoid the flu.

### So How Do You Know if You Have H1N1 or Just the Regular Seasonal Flu?

Chances are you won't. The seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus have almost the exact same symptoms. The Georgia Department of Public Health has stringent criteria for H1N1 testing and sets the guidelines for hospitals to follow.



### Signs and Symptoms

Illnesses associated with H1N1 can range from mild to severe with symptoms that are much like regular seasonal flu. These symptoms include:

- Fever greater than 100 degrees F
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Body aches, headache, chills and fatigue
- Diarrhea (in some cases)

### Think You Have the Flu?

If you think that you might have the flu, then here are some important steps to follow:

- Stay home from work or school. Going out in public exposes others to the disease and helps it spread more rapidly.
- Drink plenty of caffeine-free liquids to avoid dehydration.
- Take non-aspirin pain relievers to reduce fever.
- Contact your health care provider if you have questions regarding your illness.



### When Should I Seek Treatment

If you are an adult and have difficulty breathing, pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen, dizziness, confusion, severe vomiting or a fever that returns.

In children, the CDC recommends that you seek immediate treatment if a child has difficulty breathing or is breathing fast, turns bluish, isn't drinking enough fluids, has severe vomiting, is hard to wake up or lethargic, or is so irritable the child doesn't want to be held.

### Preventing the Flu

The flu typically spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People also get infected when the virus gets on their hands and they rub their eyes, mouth or nose.

### So, what can you do to minimize your risk of contracting the flu?

**Get vaccinated.** This year two shots will be needed to protect yourself from the seasonal flu as well as H1N1. The seasonal flu shot is available now by calling your doctor or visiting an urgent care clinic. The H1N1 vaccine will be available the first of October. Pregnant women need both the seasonal flu vaccine as well as the H1N1 vaccine.

**Wash your hands thoroughly and often with warm soapy water or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer.**

Be more aware of what you've touched and try to avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

**Avoid contact with those that are sick.** This may mean limiting your exposure to friends and family if you know that they are either sick or have been exposed to someone who is or has been sick. Also, you may want to limit your trips to populated venues to avoid coming in contact with someone who has the virus.

**Stay home if you get sick.** If you do get sick, stay home. Going out in public exposes others to your illness.

### The Risks for Pregnant Women

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pregnant women are at an increased risk for both the seasonal flu as well as the H1N1 virus.

Immunization against flu is safe and effective, even in pregnancy. The vaccine even passes some immunity to your baby, decreasing the chance that your baby will become ill if exposed to the flu. Babies who are less than six months old are not yet old enough to have the flu vaccine.

### For pregnant women, treatment of flu like symptoms in the first 48 hours is crucial for minimizing the risk to both mother and baby.

That's because immediate treatment shortens the length and severity of your flu illness, and decreases the chances that you will have a serious or life threatening complication.

If you suspect that you may have the flu, then contact your obstetrician. Please tell them the symptoms that you are experiencing.

### New Visitation Policy at Gordon Hospital During Flu Season

#### New Beginnings Maternity Center

Because we love our moms and our babies and because we want them to have the safest, healthiest delivery possible, Gordon Hospital will be changing its visitation policy for our maternity unit this flu season. The flu is particularly dangerous for pregnant and post-partum moms, and it is our goal to minimize the risks to this patient population.

Therefore, beginning September 28, 2009 until further notice, visitation in our maternity center will be limited. Visitors to the unit must be well (no symptoms of the flu), at least 18 years old and have not been in contact with anyone who is sick or has been sick in the last 3-5 days.

Welcoming a new baby brother or sister is exciting, but because children have a high exposure risk, they will not be permitted to visit during this restricted time. We encourage patients to notify family of this policy prior to your delivery so that your family and friends can know and understand the policy. Once you are discharged, it will be your decision



if you continue to restrict visitation of your new baby. We encourage you to discuss the risks with both your doctor and your baby's pediatrician prior to making that decision.

We know that the birth of a child is a joyous and family centered time. We plan to keep it that way as much as possible but with the seriousness of this illness, our first priority will be to ensure that you have a safe, healthy childbirth experience.

### Regular Hospital Visitation

Just like our new moms and babies, we want to protect our general inpatients as well. We ask that you not come to visit a patient if you are sick or have flu-like symptoms. In addition, do not visit if you have been exposed to someone who has become sick in the last 3-5 days.



Because we know you want to express your concern for your family and friend's well being and may not be able to visit, we have developed a complimentary greeting card for you to complete and address. The card will be available in the hospital lobby, and once completed, will be given to the unit's nursing staff to deliver to the specified patient.

We apologize that our normally lenient visitation policy must become more restrictive, but are following recommendations set forth by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

As always, Gordon Hospital remains committed to ensuring we provide the highest level of healthcare to every patient from our youngest to oldest.

## Gordon Urgent Care

Seasonal flu shots are now available at Gordon Urgent Care located on the hospital campus or at our Adairsville location. There is no need for an appointment.

**The shot is \$25 and we do file Medicare and insurances that cover the flu vaccination.**

### Hours of operation are:

- Monday – Thursday 8 am until 6 pm
- Friday 8 am until 5 pm
- Saturday & Sunday 10 am until 8 pm

For more information, please call Gordon Urgent Care at **706.602.8200.**



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