



A message about the 2009 H1N1 influenza (swine flu)

Kaiser Permanente wants you to know that we're monitoring the H1N1 flu situation closely. Our physicians and infection control staff receive regular updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and we're working closely with the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) and local public health officials to help ensure our members' health and safety.

Undoubtedly, you have questions about what H1N1 means for your employees and the information is changing by the day. That's why we're pulling together key updates for you. Our goal is to help you make sense of the latest medical facts, understand how to limit the spread of illness, and explain our approach to prevention, testing, and treatment.

To get started, below you will find links to more resources and frequently asked questions. For the most up-to-date news and information that you can provide your clients, please visit kp.org/flu.

For more information you can also call our flu hotline at **303-344-7600** (TTY: **1-800-659-2656**), or

- Sign up for twitter.com/kpcolorado
- Call the Colorado Health Information Line: **1-877-462-2911**
- Visit the CDC Web site: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

Key Facts about 2009 H1N1 Influenza

The CDC believes that there have been more than 1 million cases of the new H1N1 flu so far in the United States, although the actual number of confirmed cases remains much lower. To date, H1N1 flu activity has been reported in all U.S. states and territories.

The new H1N1 flu is unusual because people have contracted it during the summer, not just during the traditional flu season (from late fall to early spring). H1N1 flu has been shown to spread in settings where people live in close quarters. This, along with the rapid spread of H1N1 flu throughout the world, suggests that people are highly susceptible to the new virus. The CDC projects that 40 percent of the U.S. population could eventually be affected by the H1N1 flu, including those who miss work to care for people who become infected.

Tips for a flu-free workforce

You should encourage your employees to take precautions such as washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Using alcohol-based hand sanitizers instead of soap and water is also effective. You should consider providing employees with hand sanitizers to encourage healthy behavior.

If an employee becomes ill, they should stay home. The CDC recommends individuals stay home and limit contact with others until they are without a fever for 24 hours. However, health care workers have different guidelines that are set by the CDC.

To aid employers in managing the health of their workforce, Kaiser Permanente is offering patients a “back to work” letter, explaining when the employee is able to return to work.

You can find additional information and support tools for businesses and employers on the following Web sites:

H1N1 Flu Resources for Businesses and Employers: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/business/>

Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan for and Respond to 2009-2010 Influenza Season: <http://www.flu.gov/professional/business/guidance.html>

Preparing for the Flu (including 2009 H1N1 Flu): A Communication Toolkit for Businesses and Employers: <http://www.flu.gov/professional/business/toolkit.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will a regular (seasonal) flu shot also protect against H1N1 flu?

A. No, a separate flu vaccine will be available this Fall. You should still get a regular flu shot since both H1N1 and seasonal flu will cause illness this year.

Q. How will I know when the H1N1 vaccine is available?

A. Call our flu hotline at 303-344-7600, go to kp.org/flu, or follow us on twitter at twitter.com/kpcolorado. Be sure to check back if you hear news reports that H1N1 flu shots are being given at local doctors' offices or other locations.

Q. Who should get the H1N1 vaccine?

A. Public health authorities recommend H1N1 vaccine if you:

- are pregnant
- live with or care for a child less than 6 months old
- are a young person age 6 months to 24 years
- are an adult age 25 to 64 years **AND** have a chronic illness such as asthma or diabetes
- are a health care worker or emergency medical responder

Adults 65 or older are not considered at high risk of getting H1N1. For this reason, they are not included in the list of high-risk groups who should get the first round of vaccinations.

Q. What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

A. H1N1 has nearly the same symptoms as seasonal flu. These include sudden onset of fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, chills, headache, and sometimes vomiting and diarrhea. It is rare to have flu without a fever. Usually there's more muscle pain, headache, fever and chills than seen with the common cold.

Q. If the symptoms are similar, what is different about this new flu?

A. Unlike seasonal flu, H1N1 is much more common in young people than in the elderly.

Q. What should I do if I have flu symptoms?

A. Take care of yourself and avoid spreading the flu:

- Stay home from work, school or daycare until you have been fever-free for at least 24 hours. (“Fever-free” means no fever without medicines like Tylenol®.) (Healthcare workers should stay home 7 days **or** until their fever ends, whichever is **longer**).
- Wash your hands often, using soap or hand sanitizer--especially after sneezing or coughing.
- Sneeze or cough into a tissue or the sleeve of your shirt. Use a facemask if you go out.

- Get plenty of rest and drink more water or other fluids.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®), or naproxen (Aleve®), to relieve fever, headache, and muscle aches. Read and follow all instructions on the label.

Q. When should I call Kaiser Permanente?

A. Talk to your doctor or an advice nurse if you have flu symptoms **AND** you are pregnant, have a chronic medical condition such as asthma or diabetes, your ill child is under 5 years of age or you are older than 65. Call our advice line at **303-338-4545** (TTY: 303-338-4428) 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. **Get immediate medical attention if you are severely ill or have problems breathing.**

Q. Can I get Tamiflu® to TREAT flu symptoms?

A. Public health authorities recommend Tamiflu® if you have flu symptoms **and**:

- you are pregnant
- you are under 2 years old
- you are 65 years or older
- you have a chronic illness such as Asthma or Diabetes
- you live in a nursing home or chronic care facility
- you are so sick you need to be hospitalized

Q. Can I get Tamiflu® to PREVENT illness?

A. Public health authorities recommend using Tamiflu® for early treatment if symptoms do develop after exposure and you are in a high risk category for flu complications.

Q. Should I be tested if I have flu symptoms or get exposed to someone with H1N1?

A. Because tests for H1N1 are slow or not very accurate; testing is not recommended unless you are hospitalized. Your doctor will decide how to care for you based on your individual symptoms and health situation.

Q. Do I still need the 2009 H1N1 vaccine even if I think I might already have had H1N1 flu? Do I need to get tested to be sure?

A. No test can show whether you had 2009 H1N1 flu in the past and many other infections, including seasonal flu, have the same symptoms as H1N1 flu. If you are in one of the groups for whom H1N1 vaccine is recommended, you should get an H1N1 shot even if you recently had a flu-like illness or were told that you tested positive for the flu. There is no harm in being vaccinated if you did have H1N1 flu in the past.

Q. There can I learn more and get current updates about H1N1?

A. Call our flu hotline at **303-344-7600** (TTY: 1-800-659-2656), or

- Go to kp.org/flu
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Q. We have been told "first responders" will be a priority for the vaccine. How will this be administered by Kaiser Permanente?

A. We are still awaiting information from the CDPHE about how the vaccine will be administered. Until then, we are not able to respond to questions about co-pays or pricing because it depends on what the state or the local public health authorities decide to do.

Q. There are two shots required to be protected from H1N1 but does the vaccine not take effect until after the second shot?

A. The FDA has approved the H1N1 vaccine, which appears effective for some adult populations in one dose. Scientists don't yet know whether one dose will be effective in children or pregnant women - the vaccine is still being tested in these groups. Results in children aren't expected for another few weeks and findings in pregnant women may not come until late October.

Kaiser Permanente Colorado will follow the CDC recommendations for vaccination. How the vaccine is distributed is determined by the government. We are actively working with the state and county health departments to help develop a process for vaccine administration locally. At this point, we are awaiting information from the state.

Q. Has Colorado made a decision on how this will be administered (i.e. Schools will be giving the shot to all students)?

A. We are still awaiting information from the CDPHE about how the vaccine will be administered.

Q. Will Denver/Boulder have a different plan than Southern Colorado?

A. We are still awaiting information from the CDPHE about how the vaccine will be administered. Until then, we are not able to respond to questions about co-pays or pricing because it depends on what the state decides to do.

Q. Will members have to schedule an appointment to get the vaccine? And if so, will Member Services be screening people so that only the top priority people get the vaccine first?

A. We are still awaiting information from the CDPHE about how the vaccine will be administered. Until then, we are not able to respond to questions about co-pays or pricing because it depends on what the state decides to do.

Q. How will Kaiser Permanente handle doctor's notes for employees that are out sick more than three days, as required by many Union groups/members? If we don't want members coming into the medical offices to be diagnosed, how will they have the required to have documentation for their employer?

A. The recommendation from CDPHE is that those with suspected H1N1 or flu like illness should stay home, they should call our advice nurse at 303-338-4545 for advice and a back to work excuse.

Q. Will the vaccine fall under the prevention copay or will standard office visit copays apply.

A. We are still awaiting information from the CDPHE about how the vaccine will be administered. Until then, we are not able to respond to questions about co-pays or pricing because it depends on what the state decides to do.

Q. If the group has a deductible co-insurance plan, will the member need to pay the office visit copay and then pay for the shot? If so how much will the shot cost. If they have to have two shots, will that be two office visit copays and two shot costs?

A. We are still awaiting information from the CDPHE about how the vaccine will be administered. Until then, we are not able to respond to questions about co-pays or pricing because it depends on what the state decides to do.