

# A Note to Cigna Medical Group Patients about Seasonal Flu and H1N1

*Cigna Medical Group is committed to ensuring the health of our patients. As you may know, the fall flu season may show an increase in the “Novel H1N1 Virus” – also known as “swine flu.” Patients with H1N1 have symptoms that are similar to the regular seasonal flu, but H1N1 can be more lethal to particular groups of people. Please read the following important information to understand the differences between regular flu and H1N1, and what Cigna Medical Group will do to help our patients.*

## Seasonal flu vs. H1N1 (swine flu) – What is the difference?

You have probably been exposed to the seasonal flu at some point in your life. That’s why your body is able to recognize when it encounters the seasonal flu again and can usually fight off the infection quickly.

However, the new H1N1 virus is a “novel” virus – meaning that most people have not been exposed to it and cannot fight off infection so easily. Young people seem especially likely to get seriously ill from H1N1. People over 65 may have some immunity from viruses that circulated when they were children. Therefore, young people and those at increased risk will be receiving the new vaccine first. It will be available to all others, including seniors, after the most at risk receive it.

## Symptoms for seasonal flu and H1N1 are quite similar, including:

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle ache and soreness
- Congestion
- Cough
- Vomiting and diarrhea – linked more closely to H1N1, but can be experienced with either virus



## Best ways to reduce your chances of getting either seasonal flu or H1N1:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based cleaner like Purell®.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or cough and sneeze into your elbow if no tissue is available.
- Get a seasonal flu shot; however, it will not protect you against novel H1N1.



## Can I get a vaccine for H1N1?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is making the H1N1 vaccine available in all states. State and federal governments offer guidelines for who should get the H1N1 vaccine first and Cigna Medical Group will follow those recommendations.

### Groups that will receive the H1N1 vaccine first are:

- Infants 6 months to children 5 years old
- Children up to 18 years old, especially those who also have:
  - Asthma
  - Diabetes
  - Heart Disease
  - Kidney Disease
  - Problems of the nervous system
  - Diseases that affect how muscles work
  - Conditions that affect how they fight infections
- People who take care of children under 6 months of age
- Pregnant women
- Adults ages 25-64 who could get very sick with the flu, including those who have:
  - Asthma
  - Diabetes
  - Kidney disease
  - Heart Disease (Patients who have high blood pressure without other heart problems are not included.)
  - Lung conditions such as those caused by smoking
  - Other conditions that affect how someone fights infections
- Medical workers who are around a lot of sick people

As more of the H1N1 vaccine is made available from the government, Cigna Medical Group will initiate a plan for vaccinating everyone else. Please talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions. For more information and the latest news, visit these resources:

**Centers for Disease Control (CDC):** [www.cdc.gov/flu/whatyoushouldknow.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/whatyoushouldknow.htm)

**Arizona Department of Health:** [www.azdhs.gov/flu/h1n1/index.htm](http://www.azdhs.gov/flu/h1n1/index.htm)

*In good health,  
Cigna Medical Group*

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