



Seasonal Flu (including H1N1)

PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

A few years ago a new strain of the influenza virus (H1N1) emerged. As humans had no natural immunity to it, a large number of patients were infected.

Although the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the end to the H1N1 pandemic, it is likely that the 2009 H1N1 virus will continue to spread for years to come along with the regular seasonal influenza virus. Fortunately the current flu vaccine offers protection for both the regular seasonal flu and H1N1.

What are the symptoms of flu?

The symptoms consist most commonly of sudden onset of fever, body aches, dry cough and sore throat. Although patients may have nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea accompanying their respiratory symptoms, it is different from a “stomach bug” which usually consists of predominately nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea and from the common cold which is usually milder and does not come on as quickly.

How does the flu spread?

The flu spreads mostly from droplets (like spit and mucus) from the mouth, nose, and throat. This happens when a person with the flu coughs or sneezes near (within 3-6 feet) an uninfected person. The virus can also live a few hours on surfaces so you can become infected by touching something like a doorknob or telephone that has been touched by someone with the flu and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes. This is why frequent hand washing or use of an alcohol-based hand gel (like Purell) is so important.

How can I stay healthy?

Practice good hygiene

- ◆ Wash hands often with warm water and soap or use an alcohol-based hand gel frequently, especially after you cough or sneeze.
- ◆ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If tissue is not available, cough into your sleeve/elbow.
- ◆ Avoid touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

Get this years flu vaccine.

Fortunately the current flu vaccine offers protection for both the regular seasonal flu and H1N1. We strongly encourage all students to get the vaccine this year, not only to protect yourself, but to protect the community. As soon as it becomes available,

Health Services will offer the seasonal flu vaccine free to students. Check our website (www.brown.edu/health) and Morning Mail for updates.

Note: Students with the following are strongly urged to receive the flu/H1N1 vaccine:

- ◆ Asthma or chronic respiratory disease
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Heart, Liver or Blood Disease
- ◆ Pregnant
- ◆ Immunocompromised (chemotherapy, HIV, taking immunosuppressive drugs)

What symptoms do I look for?

Most people who get the flu will have a sudden onset of fever, dry cough, body aches, sore throat, headache and extreme fatigue. If you have a fever of 100 or greater and/or a cough or sore throat, then you meet the definition of likely having the flu.

Guidelines for Sick Patients

How do I treat my symptoms?

Fever: Fever is the most common symptom of the flu. To treat your fever, keep your room as cool as possible, wear light weight clothing, drink plenty of fluids, such as water, diluted fruit juices or Powerade, and take acetaminophen or ibuprofen per label instructions. Do not take aspirin.

Cough: a dry cough is a cough that does not bring up much mucus. Drink lots of clear liquids, avoid alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes. Rest, soothe your throat with salt water gargles (1/2 teaspoon salt in 8 ounces of warm water) or cough lozenges.

Body aches/ headaches: Acetaminophen or ibuprofen will also help relieve body aches and/or headaches. Follow label instructions. Do not take aspirin.

Avoid dehydration: To prevent this, drink plenty of fluids. Suggestions include water, broth, diluted fruit juices or Powerade, vegetable juices, decaffeinated tea, hot water with honey and lemon, Jello or popsicles.

What else should I do when I'm sick?

Limit contact with others by:

- ◆ If you have family or friends (non-Brown students) off campus and are able to go there to recover, we urge you to do so.

- ◆ Keep away from others as much as possible; the further the better but greater than 6 feet is best and stay in your room until you have no fever for 24 hours (without fever reducing medication).
- ◆ Cover your cough and clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer often and especially after coughing or sneezing.
- ◆ If possible, remain in a room separate from the common areas of your home/suite/residence hall (i.e., spare bedroom with its own bathroom).
- ◆ Keep the door to your room closed. If not possible, (i.e., shared bedroom) arrange beds as far apart as possible and stay on opposite side of room when your roommate is present.
- ◆ Use a separate bathroom, if possible. If not possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or wash your hands before and after use of the bathroom.
- ◆ Wear a mask when you are in a common bathroom, except for bathing and brushing teeth and when others are in your room. ,
- ◆ Shower separate from others.
- ◆ Ask those in your household/suite/room to wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ◆ Unless necessary for medical care, do not leave your home until you do not have a fever for 24 hours (without fever reducing medication). You are most likely to spread the infection during this time.
- ◆ If you need to leave your bedroom/home, (i.e., for medical care), cover your mouth and nose when coughing and if possible wear a mask.
- ◆ Protect others by having no (or very limited) visitors, practice good hygiene and cough etiquette, use separate towels and eating utensils
- ◆ Asking others to also follow these guidelines.
- ◆ Masks are available with RPL's in each unit and at Health Services.
- ◆ **Please ask your roommates to read the information included here on living with a sick person.**

When should I get additional care?

Call EMS (Emergency Medical Services) @ 401-863-4111 if you have (or your roommate/ friend has):

- ◆ Pain in your chest;
- ◆ Difficulty breathing;
- ◆ Confusion or decreased awareness

Call Health Services @ 401-863-1330 IMMEDIATELY if you have:

- ◆ Severe headache;
- ◆ Rash;
- ◆ Stiff neck.

Call Health Services @ 401-863-1330 TODAY if you have:

- ◆ Were feeling better for 24 hours but now feel ill again (especially if you currently have fever or cough);
- ◆ Have bloody or rust-colored mucous;
- ◆ Have severe sore throat;
- ◆ Are unable to keep fluids down (i.e., you are vomiting back up anything you drink);
- ◆ Have any other condition that concerns you;
- ◆ Have a chronic medical condition, or are pregnant or nursing, and have not already talked with a Health Services provider. (Chronic medical conditions include significant asthma or other respiratory illness, significant chronic cardiovascular, liver, blood, neurologic disease or diabetes, HIV, or taking immunosuppressive drugs).

Guidelines for Living with a Sick Person **If you are living with a sick person:**

- ◆ Consider moving in with a friend or if in a suite into the bedroom of another suite mate until the sick person recovers.
- ◆ If you share a bedroom with the sick person, sleep as far away as possible and use your room as little as possible until the sick person recovers.
- ◆ Keep as far away from your roommate as possible and try to avoid face to face contact; ideally at least 6 feet apart.
- ◆ Clean your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer on entering and leaving your room.
- ◆ Ask your roommate to wear a mask while you are in the same room, especially if they are coughing or sneezing.
- ◆ Masks are available with RPLs in each residence hall and at Health Services.
- ◆ If you develop flu symptoms, call Health Services at 401-863-1330 for medical advice.

If you are living with someone who is sick, pregnant, have significant asthma or other respiratory illnesses, significant chronic heart, liver, blood or neurological disease or have diabetes, HIV or are taking immunosuppressive drugs, please contact UHS (401-863-1330) immediately.

How do I get more information on flu?

For other sources of information, you can go to www.cdc.gov/

Questions?

Contact Health Services at 401-863-1330 for questions and medical advice. In an emergency, call EMS at 401-863-4111. 2/12