



What You Should Know and Do this Flu Season If You Are 65 Years and Older:

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Actions To Take This Flu Season

1. **Get Your Seasonal & 2009 H1N1 Flu Shot**

The best way to prevent the flu is with a flu vaccine.

People 65 years and older are recommended for annual seasonal flu vaccination. People 65 and older who have not yet gotten a seasonal flu vaccine should still seek vaccination, although supplies of seasonal flu vaccine are limited because of early availability of, and high interest in, seasonal flu vaccine this year.

People 65 years and older are now encouraged to seek vaccination against 2009 H1N1 vaccine. Supplies of the vaccines to protect against the 2009 H1N1 virus have increased dramatically and most places have opened up vaccination to anyone who wants it. This vaccine is the best way to protect against the 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus. Those who have been patiently waiting to receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine, including people 65 years and older, are now encouraged to get vaccinated.

2. **Take Everyday Preventive Actions** including covering coughs, washing hands often and avoiding people who are sick.
3. **Seek medical advice quickly if you develop flu symptoms** to see whether you might need medical evaluation or possibly treatment with antiviral medications. People 65 and older are prioritized to get antiviral drugs if they become sick with the flu according to CDC's guidance. Flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including 2009 H1N1, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

People 65 Years and Older and Seasonal Flu

It has been recognized for many years that older people are at greater risk of serious complications from the flu compared with young, healthy adults. It's estimated that 90 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths and more than 60 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations in the United States each year occur in people 65 years and older. This is because human immune defenses become weaker with age. So influenza can be a very serious disease for people 65 and older.

People 65 Years and Older and 2009 H1N1 Flu

The new 2009 H1N1 virus does not seem to be affecting people 65 years and older in the same way that seasonal flu usually does. Most people who have gotten sick from this new virus have been younger. People 65 and older are less likely to get infected with this new virus. There have been relatively few infections and even fewer cases of serious illness and death with this new virus in people older than 65. Laboratory tests on blood samples indicate that some older people likely have some pre-existing immunity to the 2009 H1N1 flu virus. But while people 65 and older are less likely to be infected with 2009 H1N1 flu, **those that do become infected are at greater**

risk of having serious complications from their illness and there have been severe infections and deaths in every age group, including older people. Some outbreaks among older people living in long-term care facilities also have been reported. People 65 years and older are now encouraged to seek vaccination against 2009 H1N1. Influenza is unpredictable, but flu is expected to continue for months, caused by either 2009 H1N1 viruses or regular seasonal flu viruses. This vaccine is the best way to protect against the 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus.

Flu Vaccination

Seasonal Flu Vaccine

People 65 and older are recommended to get seasonal flu (/flu/) vaccine this year, as always.

2009 H1N1 Flu Vaccine

The U.S. government has purchased 250 million doses of 2009 H1N1 vaccine (/h1n1flu/vaccination), so anyone who wants to get the vaccine will have the opportunity to do so. While people 65 and older were not included in the groups recommended to get the earliest doses of vaccine, they are encouraged to seek vaccination now that vaccine supplies have increased.

Related Links

- [Prevention Of Pneumococcal Infections Secondary To Seasonal And 2009 H1N1 Influenza \(/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/public_pneumococcal.htm\)](/h1n1flu/vaccination/public/public_pneumococcal.htm)
- [WEBMD ARTICLE: DO PEOPLE 65 AND OLDER NEED THE H1N1 VACCINE? !\[\]\(e27c4336460e9e6729a19580c0456728_img.jpg\)](http://blogs.webmd.com/focus-on-flu/2009/12/do-people-65-and-older-need-h1n1.html) (<http://blogs.webmd.com/focus-on-flu/2009/12/do-people-65-and-older-need-h1n1.html>)

People Age 65 Years and Older and Antiviral Drugs

Influenza antiviral drugs are prescription drugs (pills, liquid, or inhaled powder) that can treat flu illness. These drugs decrease the ability of flu viruses to reproduce in the body. While getting a flu vaccine each year is the first and most important step in preventing the flu, antiviral drugs are a second line of defense against the flu for treatment.

It's very important that antiviral drugs be used early to treat flu illness in people 65 and older who are very sick (for example people who are in the hospital) and people who are sick with flu and who also have a greater chance of getting serious flu complications (/h1n1flu/highrisk.htm).

Although they are less likely to be infected with 2009 H1N1 flu, people age 65 and older are at higher risk for influenza related complications. Therefore, they are prioritized for antiviral treatment if they get sick with either seasonal or 2009 H1N1 flu this season.

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