

## **10/15/09 Update from the Student Health Services Medical Director:**

At the student health service we have been seeing H1N1 or swine influenza since June. Students have been trickling in with H1N1 since then, until the past week, at which time we began seeing many more students with H1N1.

The good news is that in every case we have seen so far, H1N1 is a relatively short-lived illness that causes less distress than the seasonal influenza that we see every winter in Minnesota. The main complication of H1N1 is pneumonia, and we have seen NO cases of pneumonia caused by H1N1 so far.

The bad news is that, like most viral illnesses, there is really little that we can offer to help. The oral medication TAMIFLU can be used, but it must be started within the first 48 hours of illness, it is effective only in shortening the duration of the illness by one day or so, and has side effects. Across the country we are concerned that if we use it in otherwise healthy people the medicine may lose its effectiveness in patients who need it most—infants and children and pregnant women and those with poor health and chronic illnesses. (Nationally there have been at least 13 patients with H1N1 resistant to TAMIFLU.)

This doesn't mean that there is nothing you can do if you become infected. Symptoms we associate with H1N1 include runny and stuffy nose, sore throat, cough, headache, body aches, fatigue, fever, and sometimes nausea and vomiting. If you develop these symptoms you should practice what we always advise for viral illnesses. REST. You don't need to overdo it, but you do need to get enough. FLUIDS. It is important to stay hydrated especially when you have a fever and in order to keep your secretions easy to cough up or blow out, and if you are having pain with swallowing or nausea you can get a lot of nutrition by drinking calorie-containing fluids. COMFORT. For pain we recommend acetaminophen (generic Tylenol) and ibuprofen (generic Advil). Acetaminophen is available in regular strength tablets or capsules (325 mg—take 3 every 6 hours) or extra strength tablets or capsules (500 mg—take 2 every 6 hours). Ibuprofen is usually sold as 200 mg tablets or capsules, and you may take up to 4 at a time every 6 hours. If you have stomach upset with ibuprofen, which some users do, take it with food or when you have food in your stomach or both. These medicines can be taken together or alternately. For congestion that you want to treat we suggest a decongestant like pseudoephedrine or a decongestant/antihistamine combination medicine. Our pharmacy has all of these products.

The CDC has recommended that people with H1N1 infection stay at home at least until any fever has resolved for 24 hours, without the use of medicine to bring down temperature. Coughers are advised to cough into the sleeve of their shirt or jacket, and to try to keep 6 feet away from roommates and classmates. In keeping with these wishes of the CDC, we don't advise coming to the clinic if you have symptoms of H1N1, but instead taking care of yourself in the ways reviewed above. Remember that we are always happy to see and examine you and to try to be of help at the Student Health Service, but for most viral illnesses—the most common ailment we see—there is little else we can offer in addition to sympathy and encouragement and the advice reviewed above.

We will use this website [www.mnsu.edu/flu](http://www.mnsu.edu/flu) to notify you when we receive the H1N1 vaccine.