

## H1N1 & the Flu Shot Overview

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- 1) If you have signs and symptoms of illness, know the difference between the cold (rhinovirus) and the flu (influenza virus). While cold symptoms can include: cough, runny nose, sore throat and sneezing they are rarely accompanied by some of the hallmark symptoms of the flu virus that also include: fever/ chills, body ache, headache and much lower energy levels. Both infections can last 3-10 days (usually 5-7) and generally neither infection is very serious in and of itself. If either condition results in symptoms lasting 2 weeks or more or if symptoms worsen after 7-10 rather than improve this can be indicative that a person's immune system may have become overwhelmed by the infection and inefficient and is now fighting what we call a "secondary infection".
- 2) All strains of influenza leave us at risk of secondary infections, either another virus or a bacterial infection. It is the secondary infection that is usually more serious, and not the flu itself – most causes of death from any type of influenza occur in the severely immune compromised populations and are due to bacterial pneumonia.
- 3) H1N1 is a strain of Influenza A virus. Because it is a new strain to us, our immune systems do not have the cellular memory to efficiently fight it as it does other flu viruses. This is why seemingly healthy people end up with cases of H1N1 that have resulted in more serious secondary infections. As H1N1 continues to remain local and return annually our systems will get used to this strain and become more effective at fighting this virus, due to exposure creating an antibody response.
- 4) The flu shot contains 3 deactivated viral strains. The decision for which viral strains to include in the shot is based on predictions as to which viruses will be prevalent in a given season. The 2013-14 flu shot in Saskatchewan contains (from Sask Health's website): *The seasonal trivalent vaccine for 2013-2014 contains an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus, an A/Victoria/361/2011 (H3N2)-like virus and a B/Wisconsin/1/2010-like virus (B Yamagata lineage)*. Therefor we are not protected from the flu, we are simply more protected against the 3 strains (out of hundreds) that are in the vaccination. This does not however guarantee protection even to the three! I personally know of a small handful of individuals who acquired a full-blown case of H1N1 after having had the vaccine.
- 5) Getting the flu shot is a personal decision and there is no one right answer, as far as I am concerned. My preference is to work with an individual (be they a child, pregnant or elderly – i.e. even those at a higher risk) to ensure their own immune systems stay strong and that they have strategies to fight off an infection should they become ill. My recommendations include:
  - Consume a wholesome whole foods diet of organic fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds (raw) and high quality organic meats and eggs.

- Limit dairy products, and to avoid non-organic dairy altogether, as excessive intake can increase mucous production and trap viruses in the mucous membranes of the nose, throat and lungs. Avoid sugar as sugar will encourage pathogen growth.
- Get plenty of rest, fresh air and exercise. Minimize exposure to infected people.
- Take immune boosting supplements on a daily basis during cold and flu season: Vitamin C, Vitamin D, Zinc, probiotics (aka “acidophilus”), Reishi mushroom or astragalus.
- If exposed or having symptoms of the flu begin anti-viral supplements: Vitamin A, Echinacea, Elderberry.
- If the illness is lingering longer than 10-14 days or worsening and you suspect a secondary bacterial infection take anti-bacterial herbs like Oil of Oregano, Garlic, Goldenseal.
- Homeopathic flu shot preparations are available and include Mucococcinum (available through health professionals), Oscillococinum (available at health food stores) and can be used as a prophylaxis during flu season. These are taken on a weekly basis to prevent flu in a manner similar to conventional vaccines, without the potential side effects.

Do not hesitate to visit your naturopathic doctor for additional supportive recommendations!

- 6) Those individuals at higher risk of complications to the vaccine include: children, people with chronic fatigue syndrome/ fibromyalgia, neurological disorders, auto-immune disorders. Consider alternatives to the shot.
- 7) If you choose to get the shot but are at all unwell prior to getting the flu shot, postpone the vaccine. If our immune systems are already compromised while they fight a cold or flu then our risk of having an adverse reaction to the vaccine are greater. This might include getting ill with an atypical form of the virus, getting ill with another infection, headache, body ache, neurological symptoms.
- 8) If you do choose to get the flu shot be sure to support your immune system before and after the shot to minimize disruption of your immune system. Also consider some gentle detox support post-vax (milk thistle, dandelion, turmeric, for eg.) to help your body process the various additives in the shot.

The decision to get the flu shot is a personal one and there is no one right answer for everyone. In making your decision, gather information (rather than opinions) as to whether or not you would rather vaccinate or focus on natural alternatives to supporting the system, or both.

For more information, please visit:

2014 detailed H1N1 article: [http://www.drzepp.com/uploads/3/2/4/8/3248684/h1n1\\_part\\_2.pdf](http://www.drzepp.com/uploads/3/2/4/8/3248684/h1n1_part_2.pdf)

General article on flu shots: [http://www.drzepp.com/uploads/3/2/4/8/3248684/the\\_flu\\_vaccine.pdf](http://www.drzepp.com/uploads/3/2/4/8/3248684/the_flu_vaccine.pdf)

2009 H1N1 article: [http://www.drzepp.com/uploads/3/2/4/8/3248684/h1n1- a\\_naturopathic\\_perspective.pdf](http://www.drzepp.com/uploads/3/2/4/8/3248684/h1n1- a_naturopathic_perspective.pdf)

Government of Saskatchewan Influenza info: <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/influenza-flu>

Health Canada Influenza info: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/influenza/index-eng.php> ☼