



Asthma and the Flu

People at High Risk of Developing Flu-Related Complications

Most people who get the flu (either seasonal or 2009 H1N1) will have mild illness, will not need medical care or antiviral drugs, and will recover in less than two weeks. Some people, however, are more likely to get flu complications that result in being hospitalized and occasionally result in death. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications. The flu can also make chronic health problems worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu, and people with chronic congestive heart failure may have worsening of this condition that is triggered by the flu. The list below includes the groups of people more likely to get flu-related complications if they get sick from influenza.

- Children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women

People who have medical conditions who should receive both flu vaccines include: →

- **Asthma**
- Neurological conditions [including disorders of the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerve, and muscle such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy (seizure disorders), stroke, intellectual disability (mental retardation), moderate to severe developmental delay, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injury].
- **Chronic lung disease** (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD] and cystic fibrosis)
- Heart disease (such as congenital heart disease, congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease)
- Blood disorders (such as sickle cell disease)
- Endocrine disorders (such as diabetes type 1 and type 2)
- Kidney disorders
- Liver disorders
- Metabolic disorders (such as inherited metabolic disorders and mitochondrial disorders)
- Weakened immune system due to disease or medication (such as people with HIV or AIDS, or cancer, or those on chronic steroids)
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy

People with asthma should be vaccinated against both seasonal flu and H1N1 flu as soon as the vaccines become available. Separate shots are needed to be protected from both seasonal and H1N1 flu. Flu shots are our strongest defense against the flu but there are other important preventative actions you can take to prevent the spread of the flu such as:

- Stay home when you are sick,
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue,
- Wash your hands often with soap and water,
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth (germs are spread this way).

In West Virginia, you can find out more about the seasonal flu and H1N1 flu at www.wvflu.org



West Virginia Asthma Coalition
Helping West Virginians with Asthma Breathe Easier

West Virginia Asthma Coalition

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