

**Galveston County Health District**  
**Novel H1N1 Influenza**  
**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**10/01/2009**

**Q. What has changed in how we are handling H1N1 infections this fall compared to what we did in the spring?**

- A. A lot has changed since we now know a lot more about the virus. Basically we are handling this flu season more like we normally do every year during flu season.
- We know that the virus causes mild-moderate illness in healthy people and that most healthy people recover without treatment.
  - Testing for H1N1 is now a decision made by private providers and patients. Private providers, if they decide to run a test, can do so through private labs that now have access to the test. It is no longer necessary or an option to send samples to the state or CDC labs.
  - If sick, recommendations are to stay home until fever free for 24 hours (not taking any anti-fever medicine).
  - There are no more recommendations for school closures based on numbers of confirmed cases. Instead schools will consider closure based only on whether or not they have adequate resources to stay open.

**Q. Are health departments still tracking cases of influenza and H1N1?**

- A. Yes, but things are different. Health departments are collecting reports of “Flu-Like Illnesses” from schools, and the medical community just like they do during a normal flu season. Health departments may also receive reports of positive tests for seasonal or H1N1 flu but we expect fewer tests since testing is done by private providers who may or may not perform a test to distinguish the type of flu. In many ways, flu is flu. There is no requirement for a provider to test since treatments are the same.

**Q. Where can I get tested for H1N1?**

- A. There is no one specific place for getting a test. Rather you must see your provider and get evaluated, as needed. The decision to test is between you and your provider. Testing has to be ordered by your private physician, and tests are now available in

private labs. Many providers may not test (not uncommon during regular flu) since treatments are the same whether the patient has season flu or the H1N1 strain. Providers have reported that many patients are showing up at clinics saying they were sent for “testing” and this is causing confusion. Persons with severe symptoms should be referred for a “medical evaluation”, rather than for “testing” as the provider may or may not test. The CDC has issued guidelines to providers that they are following.

**Q. Why aren't schools notifying parents every time there is a case of flu among a child or staff member of a school like they did in the spring?**

A. Since school dismissals will not occur based on numbers of cases, there is no recommendation that schools send a letter to parents after each possible or probable case of flu.

**Q. When will vaccines be available?**

A. Seasonal flu vaccine is already available in private practices and many pharmacies. We recommend you get vaccinated as soon as possible. GCHD will also offer seasonal flu shots to the public in early October. Check our website at [www.gchd.org](http://www.gchd.org) for updates.

H1N1 flu vaccine is expected to arrive in mid-October. As above, GCHD will issue a press release about vaccine availability and locations where vaccines will be given. Keep in mind that many private providers in our county have registered to receive the new vaccine from the state, so there will be many options for getting vaccinated. GCHD will strongly encourage vaccine for high risk groups (see [www.gchd.org](http://www.gchd.org)); however, given enough supplies, anyone who wishes to reduce their chances of getting the flu, may be vaccinated.

**Q. Where will people be able to get an H1N1 vaccination?**

A. Based on the number of providers who have registered to receive H1N1 vaccine, it appears that the vaccine will be available at many places in Galveston County. Once the Galveston County Health District receives the vaccine, a press release will be issued along with recommendations who should be vaccinated, and where vaccination clinics will be held. Decisions regarding when or not to host additional large scale vaccination sites, other than GCHD's usual sites, are currently being considered. Providers that have not registered to receive the vaccine, and wish to do so may visit: [www.texasflu.org](http://www.texasflu.org) for more information.

**Q. Is there a shortage of antiviral drugs? What about if I do not have insurance that covers the medication?**

A. There is no shortage overall. However, to protect limited supplies, the state is urging providers to “judiciously” prescribe antiviral drugs, especially to high risk groups. Otherwise healthy persons typically recover from flu without any treatments. The state reports there are plenty of antiviral medications in the private supply. The state has also distributed supplies to HEB pharmacies for people who are uninsured. To receive them your provider must assure you are uninsured and make a special notation on the prescription for an antiviral before HEB will dispense the medication. There is also guidance for pharmacists and parents on how to make a suspension from capsules. GCHD is assuring that providers and pharmacies in Galveston County have received this information.

**Q. What guidance is given regarding daycare centers?**

A. Many of the same prevention messages also apply to daycare centers. Daycare centers may report flu-like illnesses to GCHD. Daycare providers should also assure, along with parents that sick kids stay home until fever free for 24 hours before returning. GCHD is reaching out to daycare centers to provide them information and any needed assistance.