



H1N1 Novel Influenza (Swine Flu)

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The Center for Disease Control (CDC) continually reminds us that this epidemic is an “evolving situation.” The World Health Organization declared a “pandemic” level 6 on June 11, 2009.

As a pediatrician in Utah we are seeing many cases. However, these cases are mostly mild and very comparable to the regular influenza symptoms we see every winter. The unusual thing is the timing. This is late spring/early summer in the northern hemisphere—not mid-winter.

Some are concerned that this virus is biologically similar to the 1918 Spanish Influenza which apparently first appeared mildly in 1917 and then came back and was responsible for much morbidity and mortality.

There is increased need for reviewing emergency preparedness activities in our individual families in case shipping and trucking became dramatically interrupted. Is your family capable of doing well at home for a week or more if offices, courts, schools, etc. are all closed?

In terms of personal protection the on-going advice to stay home if you are sick; wash hands and/or use sanitizer frequently; consider waving instead of shaking hands, etc; are all valid pieces of advice.

There will likely be two influenza vaccines this next fall/winter season: one the regular winter flu immunization (usually available in September) and probably a new H1N1 novel influenza vaccine possibly available in December (?).

Stay tuned and do not panic.

May I suggest the following websites for information about the disease as well as about emergency preparedness:

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/

www.ready.gov

www.pandemicflu.gov

www.redcross.org/pandemicflu

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<http://jfi.ncsconline.org>.

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