

September 25, 2009

To Our Transplant Patients,

The influenza season has started much earlier nationwide this year. Along with the expected seasonal flu this year we also have a novel H1N1 (swine) flu virus. H1N1 is responsible for these early outbreaks and we expect the traditional seasonal influenza to follow. Symptoms of the flu include, fever, chills, cough, sore throat, new onset of shortness of breath, joint/body aches, vomiting, and/or diarrhea.

You and those in your household need to take precautions for BOTH of these forms of influenza: Novel H1N1 and Seasonal.

There are a number of steps we strongly recommend you take to protect and prepare you and your household during these H1N1 and Seasonal influenza outbreaks.

- Get vaccinated **now** for Seasonal flu (unless you have a contraindication).
- When the H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine is available in October you should receive that vaccine as well. Guidelines for H1N1 vaccination of those in your household will depend on upcoming CDC recommendations.
- Both flu vaccines are safe and they are your best protection for not becoming ill.
- Please note: **Any inhaled flu vaccine contains a weakened live virus and because they may be infectious, nasal spray vaccines are not allowed for transplant patients or others who live in the same household.**
- Practice good hand washing.
- Avoid close contact with persons who are ill.
- Wear a mask if you have the flu symptoms of fever, cough and sneezing.
- Eat healthy, drink plenty of fluids, exercise and get plenty of rest.
- Be prepared at home. Have a supply of nonperishable, easy-to-prepare food on hand at home and make sure you have an adequate supply of your prescription drugs on hand as well.
- By the way, the air supply on planes is considered safe since it is exchanged frequently and should not limit your travel plans. Just avoid sitting within one or two rows of coughing and sneezing passengers.

If you think that you have had a significant exposure to the flu virus or have symptoms of the flu, call your local health care provider or the Transplant Center to review your symptoms and determine if the antiviral medicine Tamiflu ® should be started. For treatment of the flu, Tamiflu ® needs to be started within 2 days after becoming sick. Tamiflu ® is given to reduce the severity of your flu symptoms and shorten the time you are sick. Tamiflu ® is not a substitute for the flu shot; vaccination is the best preventive measure and the first line of defense for flu protection.

When you visit Mayo Clinic during these outbreaks we want you to be aware of special precautions we are taking to limit the spread of influenza. If you have any influenza symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, sore throat, new onset of shortness of breath, joint/body aches, vomiting, and/or diarrhea please speak up and report your symptoms to the receptionists when you arrive for your appointments. You will be given a mask to wear and you will be tested by throat or nasal swab for influenza. When you are

given a mask please wear the mask to all of your appointments throughout the Mayo Clinic until the results of your influenza test are known.

Please follow these recommendations in order to optimize your and your family's good health this flu season.

Sincerely,
Your Mayo Clinic Transplant Care Provider