

As the school year shifts into high gear, many children are out sick with the FLU! According to the CDC records, Georgia is one of the hardest hit states. Jacksonville also has had its fair share with the Influenza H1N1 strain "The Swine Flu". But don't panic! Stay calm and just follow the universal precautions of infection control, such as frequent hand washing, not touching your mouth, eyes or nose, and avoiding crowded public places with infants under age 3 months. Of course do not forget your fruits and vegetables, which will provide your daily boost of vitamin C and a well balanced diet.

Initial symptoms of swine influenza (Swine Flu) include high fever, body aches, runny nose, and sore throat. Nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting have also been reported. Infection control precautions (i.e., hand washing, covering mouth with tissue when sneezing or coughing) are encouraged. If your child is diagnosed with Swine Flu, isolation is recommended for infected individuals and household contacts.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines indicate that flu patients should stay at home for only 1 day after their fever resolves. People with H1N1 can probably be contagious for at least a week, according to Dr. De Serres from CDC. Although people are tempted to diminish the time a sick patient stays at home, that's probably not wise. To find out more about flu symptoms and prevention, see updated information from the [CDC](#).

The new virus is resistant to the antiviral agents amantadine and rimantadine but sensitive to oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza). It's imperative to get your child to a doctor immediately when symptoms occur, and to start treatment within 48 hours of symptom onset to ensure the most efficiency in treatment against influenza virus. The usual vaccine for influenza administered at the beginning of the influenza season is not effective for this viral strain. But on September 15, 2009, The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that it has approved 4 vaccines against the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) virus, or Swine Flu. The vaccine lots are expected to be available and distributed within the next 4 weeks.

The FDA said that the vaccines, based on early data, effectively elicit an immune response in most healthy adults about 8 to 10 days after vaccination. Clinical studies are still underway to produce an optimal dose for children, with results expected in the near future. As with the seasonal influenza vaccine, some lots of the H1N1 vaccine will contain the preservative thimerosal and others will not. The FDA has been continuing its efforts toward reducing thimerosal used in vaccines.

The FDA is working with different organizations regarding adverse event monitoring, information sharing, and an overall analysis during and after the 2009 H1N1 vaccination program, according to the news release. "As with any medical product, unexpected or rare serious adverse events may occur," the FDA notes.

When considering all of this, the most important thing to remember is that vaccines save lives and prevent complications from illnesses. The Flu vaccine will help protect individuals from serious illness and prevent death from influenza.

I strongly urge people to receive their seasonal influenza virus vaccine as soon as possible. Individuals with diabetes, asthma, congenital heart disease and patients with chronic illnesses should consult their physician for the Swine Flu vaccine.

Call our offices at (904) 273-6533 or (904) 743-2100 for preservative-free (no thimerosal) flu vaccines for your children.

Dr. O.