

## **H1N1 Flu: No Reason for Alarm**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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2019 brought with it widespread incidence of influenza across the United States, with the majority of states reporting regional or widespread flu activity.

There have been reports of people diagnosed with H1N1 influenza, the strain identified in the pandemic of 2009. But this time around, there's no reason to panic because the H1N1 virus that caused that outbreak is now a regular human flu virus and continues to circulate seasonally worldwide.

It's also part of the standard flu vaccine along with H3N2 and Influenza B.

"Since 2009, H1N1 has been in the annual vaccine for influenza. This year we're seeing the predominant circulating strain is H1N1 again, which was what the predominant strain was in 2009. So it is a strain that a lot of people haven't seen, however, if you're getting vaccinated, the vaccine's very accurate for H1N1 this year," said Dr. Brian Curtis, a physician with Peoria, Illinois-based OSF HealthCare.

Dr. Curtis says flu season, which typically runs until early March, is still in the early stages. Since the season is still young, he says the best line of defense is to get a flu shot – for yourself and those you love.

It takes a week or two to build up your immunity after getting vaccinated.

Flu usually starts with a quick onset of fever and chills with a typical bout lasting one to two weeks. While severe symptoms usually subside in two to three days, weakness, fatigue, and a dry cough can linger for up to a week.

There have already been reports of deaths associated with this year's flu, including a child in Illinois. Most of the cases are those who fall into what are considered high-risk categories: those over 65, young children, and those with chronic health issues like asthma or COPD.

What's alarming to Dr. Curtis is the increased number of people dying who either won't or didn't get a flu shot.

"When we look at some of the data, over 80% of the people that are dying have not been vaccinated for it, which makes sense with the H1N1 being the predominant strain – which is a strain that really hasn't been seen in the communities a lot," explained Dr. Curtis. "And so you have a strain that really hasn't been seen and the people that are at highest risk are people who have chronic medical conditions – so the old, young, and now people that aren't vaccinated."

Dr. Curtis acknowledges there are a small number of people who cannot get the typical influenza vaccine because of a severe anaphylactic reaction to eggs. But he stresses that number is very small, and there are other options of the vaccine for those people.

Anyone who is concerned about their risk should speak with their medical provider.

Learn more about symptoms and treatment of flu [here](#).