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# **Asthma & Flu Information**

## **for Patients and Parents**

**from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention**

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- Anyone with asthma is at higher risk for flu-related complications, such as pneumonia. Along with everyone else, if you have asthma you should:
  - wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing;
  - cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw the tissue away. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder *not* your bare hands;
  - avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth (germs are spread that way); and
  - stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- If you have asthma, you should follow an updated, written Asthma Action Plan, developed with your doctor. Follow this plan for daily treatment and for controlling your asthma symptoms.
- If your child has asthma, make sure that his or her updated, written Asthma Action Plan is on file at school or at the daycare center. Be sure that the plan and medication(s) are easy to get to when needed.
- Everyone with asthma at least 6 months of age and older should get a shot every year to protect against the seasonal flu. Children aged 6 months through 8 years who never have had a seasonal flu shot will need two doses the first time. Children who have had a seasonal flu shot in the past only need one shot. Persons with asthma *should not* use the inhaled "FluMist®" vaccine.
- Everyone with asthma who is aged 6 months through 64 years should get the 2009 H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available. The 2009 H1N1 flu shot is *not* the same as the shot for seasonal flu. If the H1N1 flu vaccine is in short supply, some persons may not be able to get the shot right away.

- Certain antiviral drugs are prescription medicines that fight the flu virus by stopping it from growing in your body. They make you feel better faster and may prevent serious flu problems. The antiviral drug Tamiflu (also known as oseltamivir) is recommended for treating 2009 H1N1 virus infection and may be prescribed for persons with asthma. Flu treatments work best if they start within two days of when you get sick. This means persons with asthma should talk with their healthcare professional now and plan what to do if they get a flu-like illness.
- Persons with flu infections might also get bacterial infections. These persons will also need to take antibiotics to fight the bacterial infection. Some signs of bacterial infection are severe or prolonged illness, or illness that seems to get better but then gets worse.
- Do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers who have the flu. This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.
- To learn more about these recommendations and for updates, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> on the Web or call CDC at 1-800-CDC-INFO.

