

Influenza: 3 Things You Can Do Right Now

Although the H1N1 virus is a new strain for which there is no known immunity, the current outbreak has shown that not everyone needs to go to the hospital to recover. In fact, the most comfortable and isolated place for a sick individual to heal may be within the four walls of your own home.

The Weber-Morgan Health Department encourages people to stop for a moment, and think about a few steps they can take to lessen the impact on their families if they become ill or need to care for someone during an extended influenza outbreak.

- Do you have enough sick leave or savings built up to keep financially afloat if you or a family member needed to be in medical isolation for a few weeks?
- In a large outbreak, you may not be able to get into see your regular doctor. Do you have a supply of daily medications as well as typical flu remedies on hand?
- Items such as hand sanitizer, cleaning solutions and laundry soap are hard to find in stores during outbreaks. Would you be able to stop the spread of the illness in your own home?

As with any illness, the basic prevention messages remain the same: stay home when you are ill, cover your coughs and sneezes, dispose of tissues and waste products in a container and frequently wash your hands with soap and water. In a home, office or school setting, it's important to sanitize surfaces in high traffic areas such as countertops, doorknobs, light switches, keyboards and handrails on a regular basis.

Symptoms of novel influenza viruses should be treated the same as you would any seasonal flu: keep hydrated, reduce fever and soothe (not suppress) coughs, sore throats and runny noses with mild pain relievers.

Call a healthcare provider if you experience a sudden spike in fever or trouble breathing.

For information on the 2009 flu season and where you can obtain an H1N1 flu shot when it becomes available, see www.webermorganhealth.org.