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How the Flu Spreads

The flu is spread by droplets from the mouth, nose, and throat when you cough or sneeze near another person (within 3-6 feet).

Sometimes you can catch the flu by touching something that has been touched by someone who has the flu – like a doorknob, railing, or phone, and then touching your own eye, mouth, or nose.

People who have the flu can spread it 1 day before they become sick and up to 2-5 days after they feel sick.

Children can spread it for up to 7 days after they become sick.

Prepare at Home & Work for a Severe Flu Season

Get the information and resources you need to prevent, control, and treat seasonal and H1N1 flu

Public health officials anticipate that this year's flu ("influenza") season, which typically runs from November to March, may be severe. In addition to the several seasonal strains of the flu, people must also prepare for a new strain that emerged last spring, Novel H1N1 (formerly the "swine flu"). While this flu appears to be no more severe than the seasonal flu, it will require a separate vaccination.

Last spring, **the H1N1 flu disproportionately impacted young children** (under age 4), **African-Americans, and Latinos** in Boston. The most impacted neighborhoods were: East Boston, Roxbury, Fenway, Allston/Brighton, North and South Dorchester, and Mattapan.

Federal reports estimate that 30% to 50% of people could become infected with H1N1 this season. H1N1 is no more dangerous than the traditional seasonal strains of the flu and the same steps will help you prevent and treat both types.

Whether you work with young children or you have young children of your own, **it's never too early to start planning to prevent, control, and treat the flu at home, school, and work.** Get started today with the following information and resources.

At home:

- **Have a plan in place** to care for children or others who may become ill.
- **Have supplies** to care for an ill person. Suggested supplies lists are available in [English](#), [Chinese](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), and [Vietnamese](#).

Flu Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches
- Headaches
- Extreme tiredness / weakness
- Sore throat
- Vomiting or diarrhea (in some cases)

Treating the Flu

- Get more information and resources at the [Boston Public Health Commission's Parent/Caregiver Webpage](#).

At work: Whether you work in an early education and care setting, community organization, healthcare organization, or business, there are steps you can take today to start preparing for the flu season.

- **Have a plan in place to keep operations moving** in the case that clients are out sick or employees are out, either caring for themselves or someone else who is ill.
- **Download a plan developed by the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)** that guides your organization through steps you can take to be prepared. The plans are organized alphabetically by sector.
- If you work in an early childhood setting, **send flu preparation letters developed by BPHC to:**
 - **Parents/guardians**, available in [English](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), [Haitian Creole](#), [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), and [Vietnamese](#); and
 - **Teachers and staff**, available in [English](#).

Preventing the Flu

Help prevent yourself, your colleagues, and the children and families you work with from getting and spreading the flu. Review and share the following strategies.

- **Wash your hands thoroughly, properly, and regularly** with soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer. [> Learn how](#)
- **Cover your nose and mouth** with a tissue **every time to cough or sneeze**. Then throw the used tissue in a waste basket. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your upper sleeve.
- **Try to limit contact with others if you or they are sick.**
 - **Stay home when you're sick**, for at least 4 days from when you get sick or for 24 hours after your fever has gone away, whichever is longer. If possible, stay in a separate room.

- **Don't share food, eating utensils, or drinks.**
- **Clean your home and workplace properly and regularly.**
 - Clean dishes and laundry with hot water and soap.
 - Clean surfaces with a disinfectant.
- **Get vaccinated** ("the flu shot").

Getting Vaccinated

Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent the flu. There will be separate vaccinations for the seasonal and H1N1 flu.

The seasonal flu vaccine is available as a shot or nose spray (for those in certain groups) and recommended for people who:

- Have underlying health problems;
- Are in close contact with high risk persons (household contacts of infants under 6 months, health care workers); and
- Want to avoid getting sick.

The H1N1 flu vaccine is expected to be available by late October. It will require two doses, at least 21 days apart, as a shot or nose spray (for those in certain groups). Initial supplies will be limited and available for:

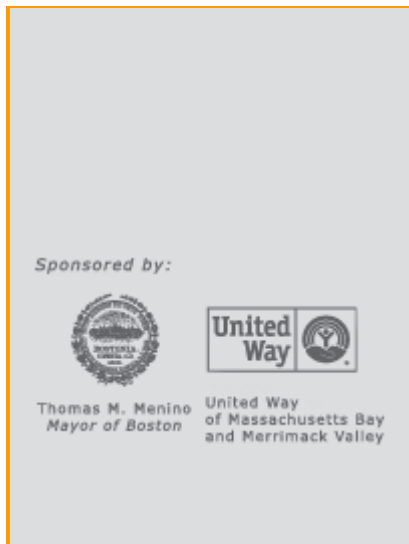
- Pregnant women;
- All 6 month through 24 year olds;
- Close contacts of those under 6 months old;
- 25 – 64 year olds with high risk conditions; and
- Healthcare and EMS personnel.

To get vaccinated, call your doctor or visit one of the flu clinics being held throughout Boston.

The first seasonal flu vaccine clinic will take place at the Boston Public Health Commissions' Food and Fuel Campaign **on Saturday, September 12, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Reggie Lewis Track & Athletic Center** (1350 Tremont Street, Boston, 02120). A limited supply of vaccinations will be provided on a first-come first-serve basis. > [More information about this clinic.](#)

Get information about future flu clinics:

- Contact the Mayor's Health Line at (617) 534-5050 or Mayorshealthline@bphc.org;
- Visit www.bphc.org/flu; and/or
- [Sign up for BPHC's Flu Alerts.](#)



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