



# Precautions for Older Adults Regarding the Flu

As the H1N1 flu outbreak continues to spread, hundreds of suspected cases of what some are calling “swine flu” are being reported each day in the United States.

What doctors have learned so far about this virus and people’s susceptibility to it is typical of what we find with most serious health hazards: Those individuals who already are at jeopardy because of other health problems are more apt to be at serious risk than others. Among the hardest hit will be the elderly and others in fragile health.

Hospitals and nursing homes follow mandatory infection control policies. That means you can rest assured that care providers are taking the necessary precautions.

Those same policies and procedures also can be followed in your home. If you are an older adult or if you care for someone who is older, follow the guidelines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for reducing transmission of diseases.

**Wash your hands often.** Both caregivers and the people for whom they are caring should wash hands often to prevent the transmission of the H1N1 virus (or any other virus). This procedure is beneficial to all. Hand sanitizers are great for those who lack easy access to soap and water. Purchase bottles of hand sanitizers and encourage older adults to use them.

**Eat healthy foods.** Homemade chicken soup may be just the ticket for eating healthy. Make up a large pot and share it with the elderly people you know. Other healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables also will go far in keeping the elderly healthy. Encourage any person for whom you are providing care to eat healthy foods.

**Steer clear of crowds.** You never know who is carrying this illness or any other. If you decide to take the elderly on an afternoon outing, stay away from groups of people.

**Regularly check on elderly neighbors or other adults who live alone.** Make sure they do not have flu symptoms. H1N1 basically brings on all the usual flu symptoms – generally just to a higher degree than other flu strains. This latest flu strain also seems to have more cases of vomiting and diarrhea, which can cause dehydration and further complications. Of course, while you’re checking on the elderly, even if they don’t have the flu, you can make sure they have not fallen or that they don’t have other needs for assistance.

**Avoid infecting others.** Don’t take any chances. If you have the flu, get someone else to check on the elderly people you ordinarily check on. If you have been exposed to the illness, wear a mask if you need to visit a senior citizen.

Reasonable precautions will not only help to prevent the spread of the flu but may also save lives in vulnerable populations such as the elderly.

For additional information, visit:

[www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com)

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