

Every year, approximately 5% to 20% of the U.S. population gets seasonal flu; more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and about 36,000 people die from flu-related causes.

We know that the best way to prevent seasonal flu is by getting a flu vaccination annually. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious complications from seasonal flu.

This year, another type of influenza has grabbed our attention: novel influenza A (H1N1).

Worldwide transmission of the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus has continued since June 2009 in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. In contrast to the seasonal influenza, current evidence indicates that relatively few severe cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have occurred among older persons, and the highest hospitalization rates for illness caused by this virus have been among persons less than 65 years.

Healthcare providers must continue educating our patients and community members about the importance of decreasing the spread of influenza. Enhanced respiratory hygiene, frequent hand washing and getting vaccinated are all reasonable strategies that have been demonstrated to reduce respiratory infections.

Because we still cannot eliminate either the seasonal flu virus or the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus, recognizing appropriate treatment and managing these illnesses are equally important. To aid in prevention efforts, the California Medical Association Foundation's Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education (AWARE) project has developed the 2010 AWARE Provider Toolkit for the cold and flu season.

AWARE supports physicians' efforts to promote appropriate antibiotic use and decrease the incidence of antibiotic resistance. The 2010 AWARE Provider toolkit contains resources that support the work of physicians to educate patients. The toolkit contains:

- **2010 Acute Respiratory Tract Infection Guideline Summary** (Adult and Pediatric versions)
- **Prescription Pad** – Available in English and Spanish, this handout offers over-the-counter treatments that may help alleviate symptoms of colds.
- **Medical Office Posters (offered in English and Spanish):**
 - *Feel Better Soon...Without Antibiotics!* – These posters inform patients that viral infections cannot be treated with antibiotics.

- **Patient Education Materials:**

- *Feel Better Soon...Without Antibiotics!* – These brochures identify common symptoms and home remedies that can provide symptomatic relief (in English and Spanish).
- *I Choose...To Prevent Influenza!* – These handouts contain information on influenza, how to prevent influenza, and what to do should one get sick (in English and Spanish).
- *Take 3* – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends three steps people can take to prevent and treat influenza (in English; includes H1N1 information).
- *H1N1 Flu Health Alert* – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) prevention, recognition and management information on Novel H1N1 Flu, 5/09 (in English and Spanish).
- *Health Tips* – This handout provides tips to stay healthy, promotes proper antibiotic use and encourages frequent hand washing (in English and Spanish).

For more information about AWARE and additional materials regarding influenza prevention, please contact Sandra Navarro, AWARE Project Director, at (916) 779-6620 or by e-mail at aware@thecmafoundation.org.

Visit www.aware.md for additional clinical resources and patient education materials.

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