



# Integrative Health Institute

## H1N1: Special Report

Who is  
H1N1?

A quick search for H1N1 in Google produces over 56 million web hits in less than 2 seconds. Yet despite the massive amount of available information, it remains difficult to decipher truth from hearsay. On Friday November 6th, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. David Butler-Jones was quoted as saying that the pandemic is speculated to have reached its peak and that the severity of the outbreak has been of the magnitude they had anticipated, both in terms of hospital/healthcare strain as well as the severity of infection within the population. This is good news, good news that still requires proactive vigilance. The Influenza A H1N1 virus is a relatively new strain of influenza virus that typically manifests as an upper respiratory infection of the nose, throat and lungs. Most of

us will come in contact with the H1N1 virus, but very few are likely to become seriously ill. Higher risk populations such as children under 6, pregnant women, people with a history of respiratory conditions and immunocompromised individuals may require heightened immune support throughout this flu season and it is for this reason that they are being offered the vaccination preferentially.

H1N1 is speculated to be transferred through surface contact when someone then touches their face or mouth as well as respiratory contact. H1N1 cannot be contracted by consuming pork products or by receiving or giving blood. Despite widespread attention many of the details regarding the spread and mechanism of infection are still unknown. It is believed that individuals are contagious with H1N1 one day before they begin to show symptoms and for seven days after the symptoms have started. This observation strongly supports a preventative approach that requires that individuals stay home while experiencing any "flu-like" symptoms. H1N1 will manifest differently depending on the natural strength of one's immune system, but generally presents with cough and fever (most common), muscle aches, sore throat, fatigue, decreased appetite and a runny nose (common) and or nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (sometimes-rarely).

If you suspect that you may have H1N1 or if you are concerned about your risk of developing the flu this season, book an appointment with your Naturopathic Doctor, to put together an individualized immune health assessment and plan.

## A Naturopathic Approach to Flu Prevention

Your immune system represents a complex relationship between you and the outside world. This dynamic relationship has an influence on and is affected by every body system. Naturopathic philosophy focuses on more than just killing germs and in addition respects and supports the ecology of your immune system. Based on this wholistic approach, you and your Naturopathic Doctor can develop an individual plan to support your internal terrain.

Germs are ever present and continue to evolve both in our bodies and in the environment. The strength of your terrain, the ecosystem within your body, will predict your susceptibility to infection as well as chronic disease. Developing an immune protection plan should be both individualized and considerate of a variety of factors including stress, diet, your emotional state, chronic conditions, age, family history, activity level, medications and supplement regimens.

According to a Naturopathic philosophy, in addition to out-right prevention, our goal is to decrease the amount of time you are sick as well as the severity of any illness you may encounter. Tamiflu and antibiotics may have their place with some infections, but when your body is handling an infection sufficiently on its own, it is usually best to simply support the body and its inherent immune fighting capacity. This will leave your terrain in a strengthened state for future outbreaks and immune challenges.

IHI is currently carrying a variety of non-suppressive remedies to assist in both flu prevention as well as treatment.

## What are the stats? How Big are the risks? As of November 5th 2009:

- There are 157 suspected H1N1 deaths reported in Canada
- 750-2500 deaths were attributed to the regular seasonal flu in Canada in 2008
- The rate of hospitalizations are 5.3/100,000 for the general population and 12.1/100,000 for children under the age of 12
- The highest mortality rate is in adults over 45 years of age at an incidence of roughly 0.4/100,000
- Pregnant women represent 1% of the population in a given year. 5% of H1N1 hospitalizations have been pregnant women, but they have been admitted less frequently to the intensive care unit (ICU) than non-pregnant women the same age (15-44)
- Pregnant women who have been admitted to the ICU or who have died from H1N1 have most commonly reported underlying respiratory conditions or diabetes
- Pregnant women are no more likely than other women their age to contract H1N1

\*Source: Public Health Agency of Canada

## What Can I Eat to Help Fight the Flu?

- **Probiotics** - research now suggests that 70% of the immune system resides in the gut. Digestive health is imperative to an optimally functioning immune system. While yogurt does contain probiotics (aka good bacteria) the quantities are insufficient to mount a protective effect. Supplementing with a good probiotic is an imperative component of a natural flu prevention strategy.
- **Immune Supporting Foods: Ginger** is a warming herb with anti-inflammatory properties and an excellent remedy for nausea. **Garlic** is a powerful antimicrobial that keep germs at bay. Warming spices like **cayenne, turmeric,** and **cinnamon** keep our enzymes functioning optimally by promoting optimal body temperature.
- **Warm Vegetable broth or chicken soup** keep us warm and nourished by the dissolved minerals - easily absorbed in the broth.
- Foods rich in **zinc and selenium** give our immune system the building blocks it needs to function well.
- **Zinc** 30-50mg/day: oysters, beef, turkey, wheat-germ, swiss chard, lima beans, Oats, mustard greens, pumpkin seeds, soybeans, kidney beans, ginger root, leeks, lentils. Note: On average whole grains contain 15 times more zinc than their processed counter parts!
- **Selenium** 200-300mcg/day: Brazil nuts, fish, scallops, clams, oats, orange juice, oysters, wheat germ, molasses, sunflower seeds, granola, beef, brown rice, turnips, chicken, egg, asparagus. Note: selenium quantities vary in foods depending on the levels in the soil where the food is grown.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Answered by one of IHI's Naturopathic Doctors

#### Should I get Vaccinated?

As a naturopathic doctors we cannot tell people whether or not they should be vaccinated. Regardless of whether you choose to vaccinate or not, you still need to be vigilant with respect to your overall immune health. Individuals with auto-immune conditions have been strictly cautioned AGAINST getting the H1N1 vaccine without consultation with their immunologist. The vaccine is estimated to be 80% effective in preventing H1N1, so additional immune support will be imperative to successfully navigating the flu season.

#### Is the vaccine safe?

It appears that the vaccine is safe, but there have not currently been any long-term studies on the effects of the vaccine in a healthy population. Limited information is available in general in Canada regarding the safety of the vaccine in children and pregnant women.

#### What is an adjuvant?

An adjuvant is an additional vaccine ingredient included to further stimulate your immune response to the virus in the vaccine. It is included to reduce the need for a second dose of a particular vaccine. In the case of the H1N1 vaccine, the adjuvant is a chemical called squalene.

#### What is Thimerosal and why is everyone talking about it?

Thimerosal, or sodium ethylmercurithiosalicylate, is a mercury derivative present as a preservative in small doses in all Canadian H1N1 vaccines. While correlations between autism and thimerosal have NOT been demonstrated scientifically, there is still significant concern about how this mercury derivative interacts with the nervous system on a long-term basis. The non-adjuvant vaccine (for pregnant women) contains ten times the amount of thimerosal as the adjuvant vaccine. If you have been vaccinated in Canada, talk to your naturopathic doctor about things you can take to mitigate the effects of mercury compounds in your body.

#### Will my breast-fed baby get anti-bodies from the vaccine?

Researchers have not yet determined the extent to which a baby will be protected by a vaccinated mother. Breast-feeding in general however, is still one of the best things you can do to protect a young baby from the flu.

#### What can I be doing to reduce my risk of contracting H1N1?

Basic hygiene (wash you hands/cover your mouth), healthy whole foods and sufficient exercise cannot be underestimated as strategies in fighting the flu. Eliminating refined sugar, sleeping and reducing stress will also reduce your risk of getting sick.

#### What Should I do if I think I have H1N1?

Book an appointment and/or call IHI to get advice from our medical team. If you are in severe distress or having trouble breathing, visit your local emergency room of after-hours clinic.

## What is in a Hand-Sanitizer?

**Toxin Caution:** Antibacterial soaps and hand sanitizers often contain an ingredient called Triclosan a synthetic agent that is suspected to have many negative health effects. These effects ironically include a weakening the immune system and endocrine (hormonal) disruption. Triclosan has also been shown to bioaccumulate in the body and belongs to a class of chemicals that are suspected to contribute to cancer in humans.

No data has demonstrated that antibacterials provide additional protective benefits to regular soap and water, often it is just easier to use. If you are selecting a chemical free hand-sanitizing product, check the label to ensure that it contains a minimum of 60% alcohol and ensure that the product does not get close to the mouths of young children.

Toxin free sanitizing products include: glycerin soap and water, vinegar, baking soda, tea tree oil, and lemon juice.

## Preventing and Treating the Flu Requires a Team Approach

Call today to book an individualized immune health assessment with one of our naturopathic doctors or visit one of our medical doctors to address other ongoing or acute health concerns. IHI is pleased to introduce a new medical doctor to our team. Dr. Christine Musngi will be available for consultation on Friday mornings for any existing IHI patients.

To book an appointment please contact our reception @ 416 260 6038

