



Diabetes and the Flu: What you need to know

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November is American diabetes month. This is a chance for us to remember that diabetes is a common condition and that there's much that people with diabetes can do to improve their health particularly in light of the H1N1 influenza virus. Diabetes is one of several chronic diseases that can increase complications of the flu and people with diabetes are in the recommended target population for the H1N1 vaccine.

Paying special attention to the flu or flu-like symptoms when you have diabetes is important. People with diabetes have an increased risk of severe illness from any flu. When people with diabetes get the flu, it can be more difficult for them to manage their blood sugar and they may suffer other severe complications. Diabetes sufferers account for about 12% of all of the hospitalizations from the H1N1 influenza virus in the United States.

If we focus in on adults, 19% of those people who have been hospitalized with an H1N1 flu infection in the United States have diabetes. Many of those who are hospitalized end up in the intensive care unit. According to recent CDC statistics, one in four hospitalized flu patients with diabetes require intensive care unit management. This can be a very severe illness for people in this population.

The CDC recommends several things that people with diabetes and their caretakers can do to improve their health during this difficult flu season:

- **Get Vaccinated:** It is very important that people with diabetes get vaccinated with the H1N1 influenza vaccine. They should receive the shot, not the nasal spray; and they should receive the vaccine as soon as it becomes available in their communities.
- **See the Doctor:** People with diabetes who have fever and cough or other symptoms of respiratory illness like flu do need to be seen by a health care provider.
- **Receive an Antiviral:** The CDC recommends antiviral medicine, such as Tamiflu, for diabetes sufferers who experience flu like symptoms. It is not necessary to wait for test results to come back on influenza testing to receive antiviral medication.
- **Consider the Pneumonia Vaccine:** The CDC recommends that diabetic patients also receive the pneumococcal vaccine, in addition to the H1N1 flu vaccine this flu season.

If you are diabetic and would like further information on how to protect your health this flu season, please visit the flu.gov website at: <http://www.flu.gov/individualfamily/healthconditions>. Additionally, the NEA Health Information Network will continue to update its website with the most relevant information for NEA members regarding their health and the flu this season. Be sure to add www.neahin.org/h1n1 as a bookmark in your web browser to keep updated on the latest H1N1 news.