

The College Health Service at Concordia College has developed an action plan to address the 2009-2010 flu season (both “regular flu and H1N1 flu) to keep our students, faculty, and staff at their healthiest.

First, some general “flu facts”: With regard to the annual flu outbreak, this affects our area during the winter months,

1. Flu vaccine is already available. Call the College Health Service (914-337-9300, ext. 2243) to make an appointment. There is no out-of-pocket fee for the flu shot for Concordia students, faculty, and staff. The Health Service will process your insurance.
2. The flu shot is safe and effective. You cannot get the flu from a flu shot.
3. Influenza (“flu”) is a serious respiratory infection, which can lead to pneumonia, and result in death. Over 30,000 Americans die every year from the flu.
4. The flu costs the United States’ economy over \$10 billion every year, in direct and indirect costs. Early vaccination is the best way to prevent the flu
5. Wash your hands frequently and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.

Next, regarding the H1N1 (“swine”) flu:

1. No cause for panic. So far, H1N1 flu isn't much more threatening than regular seasonal flu. During the few months of this new flu's existence, hospitalizations and deaths from it seem to be lower than the average seen for seasonal flu, and the virus hasn't dramatically mutated. That's what health officials have observed in the Southern Hemisphere where flu season is now winding down. Still, more people are susceptible to swine flu and U.S. health officials are worried because it hung in so firmly here during the summer — a time of year the flu usually goes away.
2. The H1N1 virus is tougher on some people. H1N1 flu is more of a threat to certain groups—children under age 2, pregnant women, people with health problems like asthma, diabetes, and heart disease. Teens and young adults are also more vulnerable to H1N1 flu. Ordinary, seasonal flu hits older people the hardest, but not H1N1 flu. Scientists think older people may have some immunity from exposure years earlier to viruses similar to H1N1 flu.
3. Wash your hands often and long. Like seasonal flu, swine flu spreads through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick. You should wash with soap and water long enough to finish singing “Yankee Doodle”. Also use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Clean your phone and computer keyboard daily with sanitizing wipes.
4. Get vaccinated. These groups should be first in line for H1N1 flu shots, especially if vaccine supplies are limited: people 6 months to 24 years old, pregnant women, health

care workers. Also a priority: Parents and caregivers of infants, people with those high-risk medical conditions previously noted.

5. Get your shots early. H1N1 flu shots should be available by October. If you are in one of the priority groups, try to get your shot as early as possible.
6. Immunity takes up to several weeks. Even those first in line for shots won't have immunity until around Thanksgiving. That's because it's likely to take two shots, given three weeks apart, to provide protection. And it takes a week or two after the last shot for the vaccine to take full effect.
7. Health officials believe the H1N1 vaccine is safe and effective, but they're testing it to make sure. The federal government has begun studies in eight cities across the country to assess its effectiveness and figure out the best dose. Vaccine makers are doing their own tests as well.
8. If an outbreak of swine flu hits our area before you're vaccinated, be extra cautious. Stay away from public gathering places like malls, sports events, and churches. Try to keep your distance from people in general. Keep washing those hands and keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth.
9. What if you get sick? If you have other health problems or are pregnant and develop flu-like symptoms, call your health care provider right away. You may be prescribed Tamiflu or Relenza. These drugs can reduce the severity of swine flu if taken right after symptoms start. If you develop breathing problems (rapid breathing for kids), pain in your chest, constant vomiting, or a fever that keeps rising, go to an emergency room.
10. Most people, though, should just stay home and rest. Cough into your elbow or shoulder. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever breaks. Fluids and pain relievers like Tylenol can help with aches and fever.
11. You can't catch swine flu from pork or poultry (even though it recently turned up in turkeys in Chile). Swine flu is not spread by handling meat, whether it's raw or cooked.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.