

H1N1 and High Risk Groups

In healthy individuals the H1N1 influenza is modest in severity; however, this same illness in individuals with chronic health issues can be quite severe and may lead to complications. The population most at risk for H1N1 flu are:

- Adults (including pregnant women) and children with the following chronic health conditions:
 - Heart or respiratory disorders (e.g. asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis, and bronchopulmonary dysplasia)
 - Diabetes mellitus and other metabolic diseases
 - Cancer
 - Immunosuppression (e.g. decreased immunity) due to underlying disease and/or from medications
 - Immunodeficiency (e.g. HIV/AIDs)
 - Kidney disease
 - Anemia (low haemoglobin);
- Healthy children under the age of two;
- Healthy pregnant women;
- Aboriginal people

People who have underlying risk conditions are most likely to benefit from early antiviral treatment (tamiflu) if they become ill with influenza. Antivirals should be started within 48 hours of symptom onset, but the earlier the medication is started from the onset of symptoms the more effective the medication is at reducing the severity of the flu and preventing complications from occurring.

If you are in the high risk group, it is recommended you have a conversation with your doctor to determine if an antiviral medication would be appropriate for you. This discussion may include whether the physician will give you a prescription for Tamiflu in advance, to be filled once you develop the symptoms of the flu, or a plan for the doctor to call in a prescription to your local pharmacy when you become ill with the flu.

An advanced prescription for Tamiflu is not appropriate for healthy individuals outside of the identified risk groups.