



American College of Nurse Practitioners

Special Position Statement

H1N1 “Swine Flu” Virus

Fall 2009

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has expressed concern over the upcoming “flu season” for 2009-2010. They note that cases requiring hospitalization and some resulting in death have continued during the summer of 2009.

As of July 29, 2009, the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended the vaccination efforts be focused on five populations:

- ❖ pregnant women
- ❖ people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- ❖ health care and emergency medical services personnel
- ❖ persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years of age
- ❖ people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

Nurse Practitioners serve in a unique position to not only diagnose and treat the H1N1 flu virus, but to educate the patients, family, and public about the disease, its transmission, treatment, and most importantly, prevention.

The American College of Nurse Practitioners recommends that NPs take an active role in education regarding and prevention of H1N1 Flu virus by keeping current on the flu activity within their area and current CDC guidelines available at <http://cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

The CDC set forth the following recommendations with regards to prevention:

Influenza is thought to spread primarily between humans through contact with the secretions from an infected person coughing or sneezing. Therefore, each person needs to take responsibility to avoid spreading if you feel sick, and avoid possible exposure if you are well.

- ❖ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then promptly throw in the trash. If tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow. This helps to avoid spreading secretions with your hands after handling common objects such as telephone receivers, door knobs, and keyboards.
- ❖ Wash your hands often, and especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- ❖ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread from your hands to other objects.
- ❖ **STAY HOME IF YOU GET SICK.** Stay home from work or school, and avoid public places and crowds to limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- ❖ **GET VACCINATED.** Encourage all patients to get the annual flu vaccine. Follow current CDC recommendations for immunizing patients specifically with the H1N1 vaccines.