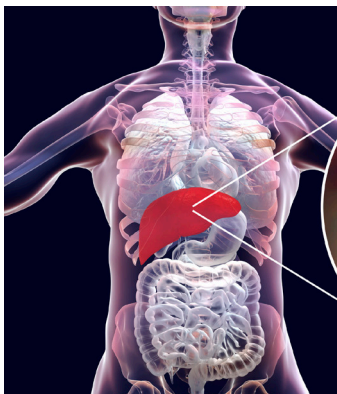




World Hepatitis Day – 28 July 2023

In this Issue

- What is Viral Hepatitis?
- Increase in flu cases across the country
- Symptoms of flu caused by H1N1



What is Viral Hepatitis?

Hepatitis means inflammation of the liver. The liver is a vital organ that processes nutrients, filters the blood, and fights infections. When the liver is inflamed or damaged, its function can be



affected. Heavy alcohol use, toxins, some medications, and certain medical conditions can cause hepatitis. However, hepatitis is often caused by a virus. In the United States, the most common types of viral hepatitis are hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C.

Many people with hepatitis do not have symptoms and do not know they are infected. If symptoms occur with an acute infection, they can appear anytime from 2 weeks to 6 months after exposure. Symptoms of acute hepatitis can include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, light-coloured stools, joint pain, and jaundice. Symptoms of chronic viral hepatitis can take decades to develop.

What is Viral Hepatitis? continued...

Key Facts

Hepatitis A

- Effective vaccine available
- Outbreaks related to contaminated food or to person-to-person transmission still occur in the United States
- Common in many countries, especially those without modern sanitation
- How long does it last:
- Hepatitis A can last from a few weeks to several months.

How is it spread?

- Hepatitis A virus is spread when someone ingests the virus (even in microscopic amounts too small to see) through close, personal contact with an infected person, or through eating contaminated food or drink.

Who should be vaccinated?

- All children aged 12–23 months
- All children and adolescents 2–18 years of age who have not previously received hepatitis A vaccine

Who should be tested?

- Screening for prior hepatitis A is not routinely recommended.
- People should only be tested for hepatitis A if they have symptoms and think they might have been infected.

Treatment

- People who test positive for hepatitis A are usually treated through supportive care (rest, adequate nutrition, and fluids) to help relieve symptoms

Hepatitis B

- Effective vaccine available
- About 2 in 3 people with hepatitis B do not know they are infected
- In 2020 the rate of newly reported cases was almost 12 times higher in Asian Pacific Islander persons than among non-Hispanic White persons.
- Hepatitis B is a leading cause of liver cancer

How long does it last?

- Hepatitis B can range from a mild illness, lasting a few weeks, to a serious, life-long (chronic) condition.

How is it spread?

- Hepatitis B is primarily spread when blood, semen, or certain other body fluids – even in microscopic amounts – from a person infected with the hepatitis B virus enters the body of someone who is not infected. The hepatitis B virus can also be transmitted by:
- Birth to an infected pregnant person
- Sex with an infected person
- Sharing equipment that has been contaminated with blood from an infected person, such as needles, syringes, and even medical equipment, such as glucose monitors
- Sharing personal items such as toothbrushes or razors, but is less common

- Direct contact with the blood or open sores of a person who has hepatitis B
- Poor infection control in health care facilities
- Although the virus can be found in saliva, it is not spread through kissing or sharing utensils. Hepatitis B is not spread through sneezing, coughing, hugging, breastfeeding or through food or water.

Who should be vaccinated?

- All infants, children and adolescents younger than 19 years of age
- All adults aged 19 through 59 years
- Adults aged 60 years and older with risk factors for hepatitis B
- Adults 60 years and older without known risk factors for hepatitis B may also receive hepatitis B vaccines

- Anyone who requests vaccination

Who should be tested?

- All adults aged 18 years and older at least once in their lifetime
- All pregnant people early during each pregnancy
- Infants born to pregnant people with HBV infection
- Any person who requests hepatitis B testing should receive it.
- Anyone with ongoing risk for exposure should be tested periodically, including

- People born in countries with 2% or higher HBV prevalence
- People not vaccinated as infants with parents born in countries with 8% or higher HBV prevalence
- People who inject or have used injection drugs
- People incarcerated in jail, prison, or detention setting
- Men who have sex with men
- People with HIV
- People with hepatitis C
- People with a sexually transmitted infection or multiple sex partners
- People who share needles or are sexual contacts of people with hepatitis B
- Household contacts of people with hepatitis B

- People requiring immunosuppressive therapy
- People on kidney dialysis
- People with elevated liver enzymes without knowing the cause
- People who donate blood, plasma, organs, tissues or semen

Treatment

- People who test positive for acute hepatitis B are usually treated through supportive care (rest, adequate nutrition, and fluids) to help relieve symptoms. There is no specific medication available.
- People with chronic hepatitis B can be treated with antiviral drugs and should be monitored regularly for signs of liver disease progression.

What is Viral Hepatitis? continued...

Hepatitis C

- Hepatitis C is curable in more than 95% of cases.
- Nearly 40% of people with hepatitis C do not know they are infected
- In 2020 the rates of hepatitis C- associated deaths were highest in American Indian/Alaska Native and non-Hispanic Black people.
- Hepatitis C is a leading cause of liver transplants and liver cancer

How long does it last?

- Hepatitis C can range from a mild illness, lasting a few weeks, to a serious, life-long (chronic) infection. Most people who get infected with the hepatitis C virus develop chronic hepatitis C.

How is it spread?

- Hepatitis C is spread when blood from a person infected with the hepatitis C virus – even in microscopic amounts – enters the body of someone who is not infected. The hepatitis C virus can also be transmitted by:
 - Sharing equipment that has been contaminated with blood from an infected person, such as needles and syringes
 - Poor infection control, which has resulted in outbreaks in health care facilities
 - Unregulated tattoos or body piercings with contaminated instruments
 - Receiving a blood transfusion or organ transplant before 1992 (when widespread screening eliminated hepatitis C from the blood supply)
 - Birth to an infected pregnant person
 - Sexual contact with an infected person
- Hepatitis C is not spread by sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, holding hands, coughing, sneezing or through food or water.

Who should be vaccinated?

- There is no vaccine available for hepatitis C

Who should be tested?

Universal screening for:

- All adults aged 18 years and older at least once in their lifetime
- All pregnant people early during each pregnancy

At least one time testing for:

- People with HIV
- People who ever injected drugs and shared needles,

syringes, or other drug equipment, including those who injected once or a few times many years ago.

- People with persistently abnormal liver enzymes
- People who received clotting factor concentrates produced before 1987
- People who received an organ transplant or a transfusion of blood or blood components before July 1992
- People who were notified that they received blood from a donor who later tested positive for HCV infection
- Health care, emergency medical, and public safety personnel after needle sticks, sharps, or mucosal exposures to HCV positive blood
- Children born to people with HCV infection

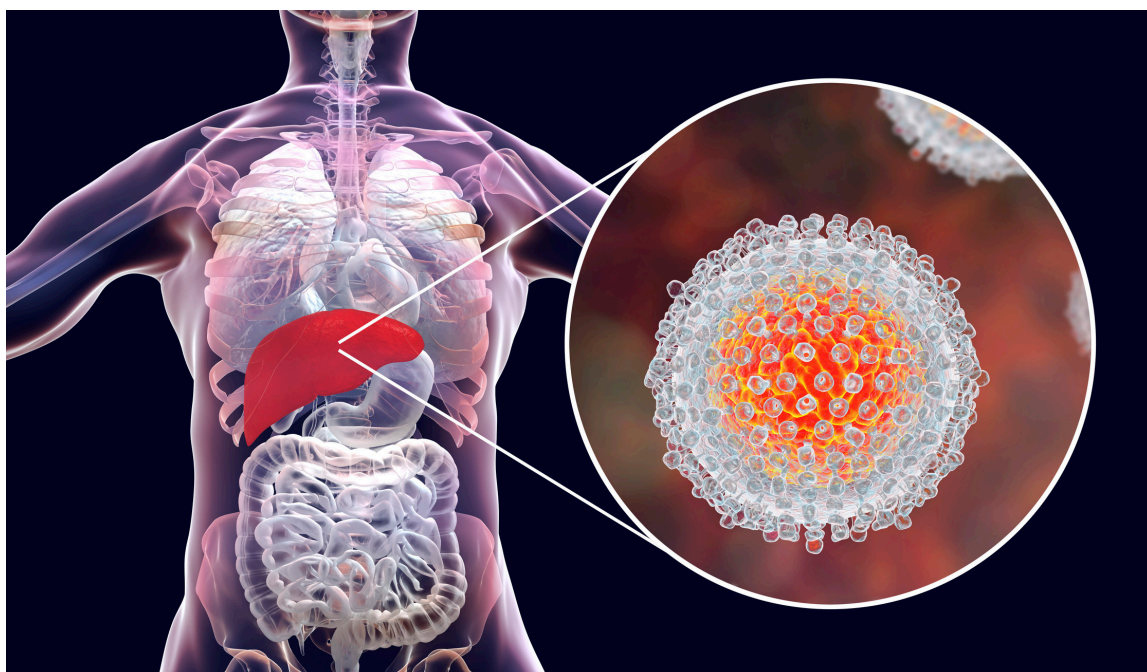
Regular or routine testing for:

- People with ongoing risk factors including people who currently inject and share needles, syringes, or other drug equipment
- People with certain medical conditions including those who ever received maintenance hemodialysis
- Any person who requests hepatitis C testing

Treatment

- People who test positive for hepatitis C should be treated with medication right away
- Treatment is typically taking pills for 8 – 12 weeks. The pills can cure more than 95% of people and side effects are minimal
- The sooner the treatment starts the better it will be at preventing liver damage and further spread. Experts recommend not waiting until a person already has liver damage.

Source: What is Viral Hepatitis? | CDC – Accessed 7 June 2023



Increase in flu cases across the country (5 June 2023)

Influenza cases at sentinel influenza-like illness (ILI) and pneumonia surveillance sites have been steadily increasing since week 15 (starting 10 April 2023) (figure 1). Private laboratories have also detected increasing numbers of influenza cases, and NICD has received reports of influenza clusters in schools and workplaces.

The 2023 influenza season started in week 17 (week starting 27 April 2023) when the influenza detection rate (3-week moving average) breached the seasonal threshold and remained on low activity for two consecutive weeks in the pneumonia surveillance programme (figure 1). The increase in case numbers has been identified in all 6 provinces where surveillance is conducted. As of 28 May 2023, the most commonly detected subtype and lineage is influenza A (H3N2) (146/272, 55%), followed by influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 (116/272, 43%) and, influenza B Victoria (3/272, 1%). 181 samples have subtyping results pending.

Influenza A(H3N2), A(H1N1) pdm09, and influenza B are common seasonal influenza strains in humans. Influenza A(H1N1) pdm09, which is sometimes incorrectly referred to as “swine flu” has been one of the circulating seasonal influenza strains following its emergence in 2009. The term “swine flu” should not be used as it causes unnecessary panic. The clinical course of infection and management of this strain is similar to other influenza strains.

Although the majority of people with influenza will present with mild illness, influenza may cause severe illness, which may require hospitalisation or cause death, especially in individuals who are at risk of getting severe influenza illness or complications. Groups at increased risk of severe illness or complications of influenza include pregnant women, people living with HIV, people with chronic illnesses or conditions like diabetes, lung disease, tuberculosis, heart disease, renal disease and obesity, the elderly (65 years and older) and children less than 2 years old. These groups should be encouraged to seek medical help early.

As the influenza season has started, the influenza vaccine remains the primary means for preventing seasonal influenza infection (figure 1). Ideally, the vaccine should be administered before the influenza season (March to April). However, even if the season has already started, it is never too late to get vaccinated, especially for individuals who have high risk of severe influenza illness or complications. To prevent contracting or spreading the influenza virus, the following measures are recommended: avoid close contact with sick individuals, stay home when sick, cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, regularly clean hands, avoid touching the mouth, eyes, and nose, and clean and disinfect commonly used surfaces. Clinicians should include influenza as a possible diagnosis when managing patients with respiratory illness.

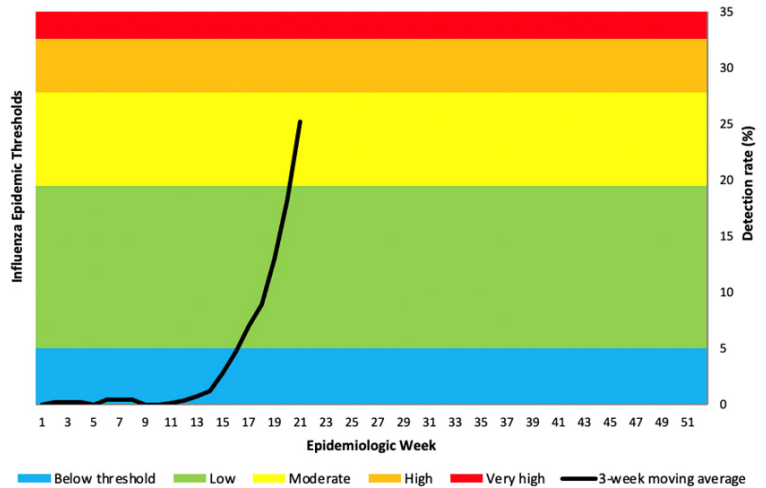


Figure 1: Influenza percentage detections and epidemic thresholds among cases of all ages, pneumonia surveillance in public hospitals, 01 January 2023 to 28 May 2023

Updated guidelines on influenza diagnosis and management are available at: https://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Influenza-guidelines_-25April-2023-final.pdf

Weekly influenza surveillance reports are published at: <https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/disease-index-covid-19/surveillance-reports/weekly-respiratory-pathogens-surveillance-report-week/>

Source: Increase in flu cases across the country(5 June 2023) - NICD - accessed 7 June 2023.



Symptoms of flu caused by H1N1

The symptoms of flu caused by H1N1, commonly called the swine flu, are similar to those of other flu viruses.

Symptoms usually start quickly and can include:

- Fever, but not always.
- Aching muscles.
- Chills and sweats.
- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny or stuffy nose.
- Watery, red eyes.
- Eye pain.
- Body aches.
- Headache.
- Tiredness and weakness.
- Diarrhoea.
- Feeling sick to the stomach, vomiting, but this is more common in children than adults.

Flu symptoms develop about 1 to 4 days after you're exposed to the virus.

When to see a doctor

If you're generally healthy and develop flu symptoms, most people may not need to see a health care provider. But some people are at higher risk of flu complications.

Call your care provider if you have flu symptoms and you're pregnant or have a chronic disease. Some examples are asthma, emphysema, diabetes, or a heart condition.

If you have emergency symptoms of the flu, get medical care right away. For adults, emergency symptoms can include:

- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath.
- Chest pain.
- Signs of dehydration such as not urinating.
- Ongoing dizziness.
- Seizures.
- Worsening of existing medical conditions.
- Severe weakness or muscle pain.

Emergency symptoms in children can include:

- Trouble breathing.
- Pale, gray, or blue-coloured skin, lips or nail beds depending on skin colour.
- Chest pain.
- Dehydration.
- Severe muscle pain.
- Seizures.
- Worsening of existing medical conditions.

Causes

Influenza viruses such as H1N1 infect the cells that line your nose, throat, and lungs. The virus spreads through the air in droplets released when someone with the virus coughs, sneezes, breathes, or talks. The virus enters your body when you breathe in contaminated droplets. It also can enter your body if you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.

You can't catch swine flu from eating pork.

People with the virus are likely able to spread the virus from about a day before symptoms appear until about four days after they start. Children and people with weakened immune systems may be able to spread the virus for a slightly longer time.

Risk factors

Factors that may increase your risk of developing H1N1 or other influenza viruses or their complications include:

- Age. Influenza tends to have worse outcomes in children under age 2, and adults older than age 65.
- Living or working conditions. People who live or work in facilities with many other residents are more likely to get the flu. Some examples are nursing homes or military barracks. People who are staying in the hospital also are at higher risk.
- Weakened immune system. Cancer treatments, anti-rejection medications, long-term use of steroids, organ transplant, blood cancer or HIV/AIDS can weaken the immune system. This can make it easier to catch the flu and may increase the risk of developing complications.
- Chronic illnesses. Chronic conditions may increase the risk of influenza complications. Examples include asthma and other lung diseases, diabetes, heart disease, and nervous system diseases. Other examples are metabolic disorders, problems with an airway and kidney, liver, or blood disease.
- Race. American Indians or Alaska Native people may have a higher risk of influenza complications.
- Aspirin use under age 19. People on long-term aspirin therapy and who are younger than 19 years of age are at risk of Reye syndrome if infected with influenza.
- Pregnancy. Pregnant people are more likely to develop influenza complications, especially in the second and third trimesters. This risk continues up to two weeks after the baby is born.
- Obesity. People with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher have a higher risk of flu complications.

Complications

Influenza complications include:

- Worsening of chronic conditions, such as heart disease and asthma.
- Pneumonia.
- Neurological symptoms, ranging from confusion to seizures.
- Respiratory failure.
- Bronchitis.
- Muscle tenderness.
- Bacterial infections.

Symptoms of flu caused by H1N1 (continued)

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone age 6 months or older. The H1N1 virus is included in the seasonal flu vaccine. The flu vaccine can lower your risk of getting the flu. It also can lower the risk of having serious illness from the flu and needing to stay in the hospital.

Each year's seasonal flu vaccine protects against the three or four influenza viruses. These are the viruses expected to be the most common during that year's flu season.

Flu vaccination is especially important because the flu and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cause similar symptoms.

Both COVID-19 and the flu may be spreading at the same time. Vaccination is the best way to protect against both. Flu vaccination could lessen symptoms that might be confused with those caused by COVID-19.

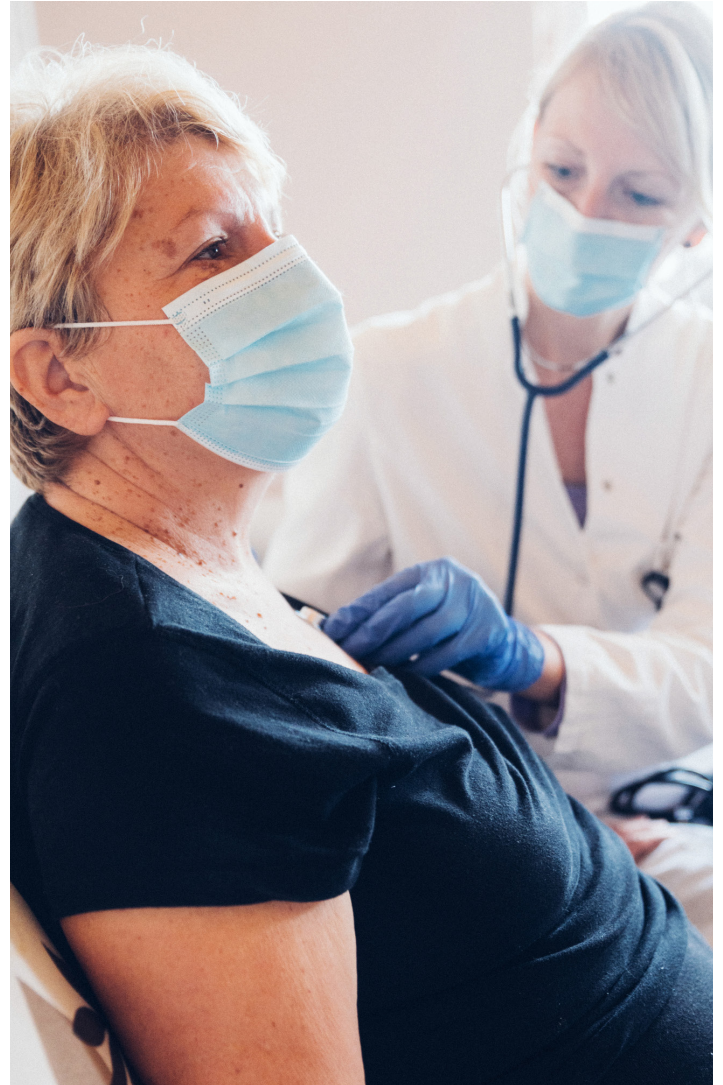
Vaccination also helps lower the number of people with severe flu and complications. And that may lower the number of people needing to stay in the hospital.

The flu vaccine is available as an injection and as a nasal spray.

The nasal spray is approved for people between 2 and 49 years old. It isn't recommended for some groups, such as:

- Children younger than age 2.
- Adults age 50 and older.
- Pregnant people.
- Children between 2 and 17 years old who are taking aspirin or a salicylate-containing medication.
- People with weakened immune systems.
- Close contacts or caregivers of people with highly weakened immune systems. Examples are people receiving chemotherapy, or recent bone marrow or solid organ transplantation.
- Children 2 to 4 years old who have had asthma or wheezing in the past 12 months.

If you have an egg allergy you can still get a flu vaccine.



These measures also help prevent the flu and limit its spread:

- Wash your hands often. If available, use soap and water, washing for at least 20 seconds. Or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow. Then wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your face. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces. Regularly clean often-touched surfaces to prevent spread of infection from a surface with the virus on it to your body.
- Avoid contact with the virus. Try to avoid people who are sick or have symptoms of flu. And if you have symptoms, stay home if you can. When flu is spreading, consider keeping distance between yourself and others while indoors, especially in areas with poor air flow. If you're at high risk of complications from the flu consider avoiding swine barns at seasonal fairs and elsewhere.

Source: H1N1 flu (swine flu) - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic - Accessed 7 June 2023

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22 June 2023 | V1 | DD