

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Preparing for the H1N1 Epidemic

### Tips to make you flu-savvy

(AP) -- Since it first emerged in April, the global H1N1 flu epidemic has sickened more than 1 million Americans and killed about 500. It's also spread around the world, infecting tens of thousands and killing nearly 2,000.

A White House report from an expert panel suggests that from 30 percent to half the population could catch H1N1, also called swine flu, during the course of this pandemic and that from 30,000 to 90,000 could die.

So how worried should you be and how do you prepare? The Associated Press has tried to boil down the mass of information into 10 things you should know to be flu-savvy.

1. No cause for panic. So far, swine 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.

2. Virus tougher on some. Swine flu is more of a threat to certain groups — children under 2, pregnant women, people with health problems like asthma, diabetes and heart disease. Teens and young adults are also more vulnerable to the H1N1 flu. Ordinary, seasonal flu hits older people the hardest.

3. Wash your hands often and long.

Like seasonal flu, H1N1 spreads through the coughs and sneezes of people who are sick. Emphasize to children that they should wash with soap and water long enough to finish singing the alphabet song, "Now I know my ABC's..."

4. Get the kids vaccinated.

These groups should be first in line for swine flu shots, especially if vaccine supplies are limited — people 6 months to 24 years old, pregnant women, health care workers.

5. Get your shots early. Millions of swine flu shots



Research nurse Wendy Nesheim draws H1N1 flu vaccine into a syringe to administer to volunteer participants during clinical trials conducted by Emory University in Atlanta.

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 awhile. Even those first in line for shots won't have immunity until around Thanksgiving. The regular seasonal flu shot should be widely available in September. People over 50 are urged to be among the first to get that shot.

7. Vaccines are being tested. Health officials presume the swine flu vaccine is safe and effective, but they're testing it to make sure.

8. Help! Surrounded by H1N1 flu.

If an outbreak of H1N1 flu hits your 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 prob-

lems or are pregnant and develop flu-like symptoms, call your doctor right away. You may be prescribed Tamiflu or Relenza. These drugs can reduce the severity of 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.

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 achiness and fever. Always check with a doctor before giving children any medicines. Adult cold and flu remedies are not for them.

10. No swine flu from barbecue.

You can't catch swine flu from pork — or poultry either (even though H1N1 flu recently turned up in turkeys in Chile). Swine flu is not spread by handling meat, whether it's raw or cooked.

### HEALTHWATCH

**Cancer Resource Center** -- 286-6816. Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Lead Poisoning Prevention** -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

**Family Caregiver Support Group** -- This topic-oriented group offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges and rewards of providing care to an older relative or friend. Meets the first Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital.

**Chronic Pain Support Group** - Meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

**Maternity Water Workout** -- Helping new moms regain muscle tone, strength, and flexibility, all in the support and freedom of the water. Call 503-256-4000 for more information.

**Cholesterol Profiles** -- Calls helps you keep an eye on your cholesterol and other indicators of heart health; educational material provided. For more information, call 503-261-6611.

**Heart Talk Support Group** -- Meets on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

**Beating Breast Cancer** -- Health experts at Providence offer free seminars on how nutrition and exercise choices can reduce the risk and improve survival from breast cancer. Visit the web at [providence.org/integrativemedicine](http://providence.org/integrativemedicine).

**Mind Body Health Class** -- Your thoughts, feelings and habits have tremendous impact on your physical and mental health. Learn and practice techniques to help you improve your mood, health and wellbeing, including effective ways to manage difficult emotions and chronic stress or illness. Registration is \$70 for Kaiser Permanente members and \$95 for nonmembers. Call 503-

**Families with Mental Illness** -- A free, 12-week course for people whose family members live with mental illness is offered at Emanuel Hospital, Mt. Hood Medical Center and Providence Medical Center. The course has been described as "life-changing" by former participants. Register by calling 503-203-3326.

**Helping Kids Get Healthy and Fit** -- Providence is accepting registration for its fall 2009 Healthy n' Fit class, a pediatric weight management program targeting children 8 to 15 years old. The 10-week program is led by a certified dietician and exercise specialist. Fee \$250. To register, call 503-215-2233.

**Mammography Screening** -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

**Bereavement Support Groups** - Free, safe confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. Call 503-215-4622.

**Parenting Classes** -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For a schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: [providence.org/classes](http://providence.org/classes).

## Smoking Warnings to get Gruesome

### Aim is to get people to quit

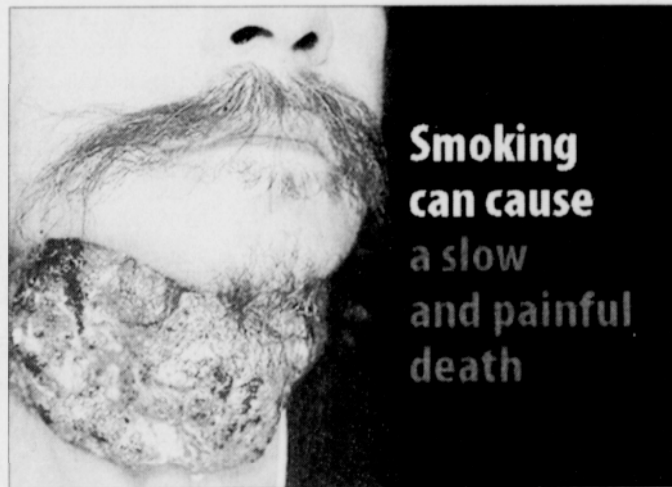
Would a gruesome picture of a cancer-ravaged mouth with rotting teeth make you think twice about buying a pack of cigarettes?

That's the goal of new federal regulations expected to go into effect within three years. The rules will require tobacco companies to cover at least half of the front and back of packages with graphic -- and possibly gruesome -- images illustrating the dangers of smoking.

If U.S. regulations are modeled after those already in place in Canada and other countries, the warnings will be shocking: blackened lungs, gangrenous feet, bleeding brains and people breathing through tracheotomies.

Though hard to look at, the more graphic the image, the more effective in discouraging smoking, said Stanton Glantz, a professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco and director of the university's Center for Tobacco Control, Research and Education.

"The graphic warnings really work," Glantz said. "They substantially increase the likelihood someone will quit smoking. They substantially decrease the chances a kid



Smoking can cause a slow and painful death

Smokers face graphic images of rotting teeth and lungs, throat cancer and a dead body when they light up in Great Britain. The graphic warnings are may soon be coming to the United States.

will smoke. And they really screw up the ability of the tobacco industry to use the packaging as a marketing tool."

Over the last decade, countries as varied as Canada, Australia, Chile, Brazil, Iran and Singapore, among others, have adopted graphic warnings on tobacco products. Some are downright disturbing: in Brazil, cigarette packages come with pictures of dead babies and a gangrened foot with blackened toes.

In the United States, the authority to force packaging changes was granted on June 22, when President Barack Obama, who has struggled with cigarette addiction since he was a teen, signed into law the Family Smoking Preven-

tion and Tobacco Control Act. The landmark legislation gives the U.S. Food and Drug Administration broad new authority to regulate the marketing of tobacco products.

Under the law, the FDA has two years to issue specifics about the new graphic warnings tobacco products will be required to carry. Tobacco companies then have 18 months to get them onto packages.

Currently, the United States

has some of the weakest requirements for cigarette package warnings in the world, said David Hammond, an assistant professor in the department of health studies at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. The text-only warnings on packages have changed little since 1984.

"Consumers in many Third World countries are getting more and better information about the risks of cigarettes off their packs," Hammond said.

With much at stake for tobacco companies, there will be much wrangling over the details, Glantz said.

Yet research shows the FDA shouldn't compromise, Glantz said. The more frightening the image, the greater the anti-smoking effect, he said.

Despite some research that has suggested images that are too stomach-turning may backfire because people eventually ignore them, new research is showing the most graphic images pack the most punch, said Jeremy Kees, an assistant professor of marketing at Villanova University.

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