

# Asthma, Diabetes, and Other Health Conditions Bring Greater Flu Risks

## ***CDC Urges People with Chronic Health Conditions to Get a Flu Vaccine***

If you are one of the millions of Americans with a long-term health condition like asthma, diabetes, stroke, heart or lung disease, this important information about flu applies to you. When combined with your existing health condition, the flu increases your risk of becoming seriously sick, which could result in an unexpected and expensive trip to the hospital — or even death.

“We have known for years that flu is a serious disease, especially for people with certain chronic health conditions,” said Dr. Anne Schuchat, Assistant Surgeon General of the U.S. Public Health Service and CDC’s Director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

These health conditions include asthma (even if controlled by medication), lung disease, heart disease, neurologic conditions (like stroke and other conditions related to the nervous system, brain or spinal cord), blood disorders, endocrine disorders (like diabetes, both type 1 and type 2), kidney disorders, liver disorders, or weakened immune systems.

The burden of flu on people with these conditions was demonstrated last flu season, as the world faced its first flu pandemic in more than 40 years. Most of the deaths from 2009 H1N1 were in people who had at least one health condition. People with long-term health conditions also were more likely to be hospitalized. CDC estimates that nearly 60 percent of children and more than 85 percent of adults hospitalized with 2009 H1N1 had one or more long-term health conditions or were pregnant.

Of those admitted to the hospital with 2009 H1N1 illness, asthma was the most common long-term health condition, followed by diabetes, chronic cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, pregnancy, neurological disorders (including stroke or seizure disorders in adults), and neuromuscular disorders. People who were mor-

bidly obese (extremely overweight) also appeared to be at higher risk for severe 2009 H1N1 in some studies.

Experts expect that 2009 H1N1 will be back next season along with other, regular flu viruses. The message is clear: people with long-term health conditions should take action to protect themselves against the flu by getting a flu vaccine. This season’s vaccine will protect against 2009 H1N1 and two other flu viruses. Safe, reliable flu vaccines have been made for decades, and you cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine.

Millions of Americans are impacted by these conditions, although many people don’t know that they have a long-term health condition. For example, diabetes impacts an estimated 23.6 million Americans, but 5.7 million people (24 percent of those who have the disease in the United States) don’t even know they have it. Heart disease affects an estimated 26.6 million Americans. And asthma affects 23.4 million Americans. Ask your doctor whether you have a health condition that makes you more vulnerable to flu. If you do, be sure you get a flu vaccine.

Symptoms of flu include fever (though not everyone with flu will have a fever), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and sometimes diarrhea and vomiting.

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through the coughing, sneezing, or talking of someone with the flu. Flu viruses may also spread when people touch something with flu virus on it and then touch their mouth, eyes or nose. Many other viruses spread these ways, too.

For more information, visit [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov), [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu), or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).