

MAINE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
Office of Disaster Behavioral Health

H1N1 Virus Alert – Managing Stress Reactions

Stress can be a natural reaction to a negative, unnatural event – such as the H1N1 Virus and the potential for it becoming widespread. Warnings may have you experiencing some of the following reactions:

- Disruption of your normal routine due to preoccupation with the news (about flu)
- Irritability or impatience
- Disruption of normal sleeping or appetite
- Difficulty concentrating
- Less interest in daily activities
- Feeling anxious, jumpy or nervous

Everyone reacts differently, and some people may have reactions that seem to you to be excessive. Remember that everyone is entitled to their own reaction and it may be tempered by their personal experiences. Sometimes worry, fear and anxiety can cause physical symptoms. These might include:

- Nausea, dizziness
- Aches – headache or stomachache
- Trembling, shakiness, sweating
- Feeling like things are unreal
- Pounding or racing heart

If you are experiencing these symptoms over a period of time you may want to check with your medical provider. If you do not have a provider, you may want to check with the flu information support line (1-888-257-0990) to find the Federally Qualified Health Center nearest to you.

Some General Things You Can Do To De-Stress

- Stay connected with friends and family – talking, texting, emailing your support system may also offer them support.
- Keep up your routines, including eating regularly and sleeping as usual.
- Exercise – outdoors when possible for the fresh air and natural light.
- Avoid excessive alcohol or drugs – which can make you less alert and cause health problems.
- Stay informed – keep up with the latest suggestions for health and safety.
- Focus on the immediate future – what the plans are for today – and build-in something enjoyable.
- If you feel overwhelmed, talk to someone about your feelings.
- Find ways to help others – offer support, share information about resources.

Remember: For most people, stress reactions will go away in time!

Children May Respond to Stress Differently

Some children may start acting younger –

- Thumb sucking or bed wetting
- Nightmares
- Clinging to parents
- Withdrawal
- Not wanting to go to bed

Teenagers may –

- Worry excessively
- Resist parental authority
- Become depressed
- Be easily irritated or impatient
- Use drugs or alcohol
- Act without thinking

How To Help Children Cope

- Talk about your own feelings clearly and calmly.
- Provide information that your child can understand. (Some websites for children are listed below.)
- Encourage questions and be prepared to discuss it more than once.
- Tell your child that you will do everything you can to keep him safe – repeat this often.
- Encourage your child to keep in touch with friends by phone or email if they cannot play together.
- Spend extra time with your child, especially at bedtime.
- Maintain your child's routine.
- Teach your child things he can do to protect himself (hand washing, etc)
- Praise good behavior.
- Find fun and relaxing activities for you and your child.
- Hold and hug your child often – be reassuring and comforting.

Some websites for children:

Dallas County Health and Human Services Just For Kids:

[Cover That Cough Game](#) (FUN!)

[Be A Germ Stopper](#)

[Scrub Club](#)

[Germ Fighter Coloring Book](#)

[Hand Washing For Kids](#)

Other Kid resources:

Center for Disease Control Flu Info

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/index.htm>

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences National Institutes of Health (NIH)

<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov/pandemic.htm>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

http://www.nctsnet.org/nccts/nav.do?pid=typ_nd_epid_main

Mental Health America | formerly known as the National Mental Health Association.

Helping Children Handle Disaster-related Anxiety

<http://www.nmha.org/index.cfm?objectid=E2A880AE-1372-4D20-C886E4E4AA69EEA1>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

<http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/KidS/html/flu.htm>

FEMA for Kids

<http://www.fema.gov/kids/>

Wrightslaw is a website about special education law and advocacy, identifies groups in your state

<http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com/>