

H1N1 Questions and Answers for October 7 Press Release

Should people get the H1N1 vaccination?

What is clear is that everyone, whether or not they choose to get the H1N1 vaccine, benefits from a stronger immune system, and that's where an ND can help most. It's most important to take care of your immune system if you're not getting the flu shot. As well, there's a lot that people can do to reduce the risk of being exposed to the flu.

But do NDs have a position on the vaccination?

In keeping with the advice from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, the H1N1 vaccine is most beneficial for the elderly and those with other underlying conditions who are at risk of developing serious complications if they were to contract H1N1 or even the seasonal flu. People who are otherwise healthy are at lower risk, and for a number of reasons may prefer not to be immunized.

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What can NDs do to boost the immune system?

NDs work from the understanding of the human body's natural ability to respond to viruses that attack it. Sometimes these natural defenses are not as strong as they need to be. This may be because of diet, or even the level of everyday stress. NDs will work with a patient to assess their current health status, help them to make changes in their lifestyle and diet where necessary, and then boost their immune system with individualized recommendations for naturopathic therapies that are proven most effective.

One thing that many patients do is to book a prevention appointment with an ND. Not only can the ND work with the patient on prevention, but also provide recommendations for what they can do if they feel the flu starting to come on so that they can reduce the severity and get better faster. NDs have the expertise to help patients make the right choices.

What else can an ND do to help people avoid the flu?

There are a lot of common sense things that really make a difference. This includes: washing hands often; drinking lots of water to help keep the mucous membrane moist and a more effective barrier; and reducing the level of stress and getting enough sleep.

What would an ND recommend when someone starts to feel sick?

Hopefully they have taken the step of being prepared with the vitamins and other supplements that an ND can recommend to help them get through the flu more quickly. Definitely they should stay home and get the rest their body needs. This also helps to reduce the spread of flu. They can also call their ND for more focused support in helping their body to fight a viral infection like the flu using natural therapies.

If a patient is in one of the priority groups for treatment and more at risk from the flu, they should immediately call their ND or other primary health care practitioner in keeping with Ministry of Health and Long Term Care guidelines. You should also call your health care provider if you do not start to feel better after a few days or if your symptoms start getting

worse. An ND has the training as a primary care provider to be able to refer a patient to another health care practitioner if patients need antivirals like Tamiflu.