



2009 Antiviral Drugs

What are antiviral drugs?

- Antiviral drugs are prescription medications that decrease the ability of flu viruses to reproduce in your body
- These drugs can reduce the severity of flu and shorten the length of illness.
- Antivirals come in pill, liquid and inhaler forms under the names Tamiflu® or Relenza® .
- These drugs can be used to treat both seasonal and H1N1 influenza.
- These drugs can be used in some people as a way to prevent the flu.
- **Getting a flu vaccine is still the most important step in protection against flu.**

Who should be treated with antiviral drugs?

- Most people with flu will recover without treatment.
- Your health care provider will decide if you need to be treated.
- Treatment is recommended for certain people, such as those with more severe illness, who are hospitalized, or are at higher risk of complications.

What people are considered higher risk for complications from influenza?

- Children younger than 2 years old
- Pregnant women
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- People with certain chronic medical conditions
- People aged 65 years and older

Can antiviral drugs be used to prevent flu?

- Antivirals can be used on a limited basis to help prevent influenza infection.

- People who cannot have the flu vaccine may be able to use these drugs to keep from getting the flu.

What side effects can occur with antiviral drugs?

- Side effects differ for each drug.
- If you are prescribed one of these drugs, ask your doctor to explain the possible side-effects.

Will everyone with influenza need antiviral drugs?

- Antiviral drugs are not needed for most people with flu.
- Antivirals work best if started within the first 2 days of flu symptoms.
- If too many people use these drugs the chances are greater that the virus could become resistant to them.
- Your health care provider is the best one to decide whether antiviral drugs are best for you.

More information may be found at these websites: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu; www.fda.gov; and www.dhd10.org.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used as a substitute for talking with a health care provider. If you have any questions about influenza or antivirals, please talk with your health care provider.

District Health Department #10

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