



**American  
Red Cross**  
of Greater Grand Rapids

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Press Release  
**PRESS RELEASE**  
*For Immediate Release*

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## **Red Cross Offers Flu Season Advice** *You are your best protection against flu viruses*

**GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.**, [September 22, 2009] – Fall means the start of school—and the start of flu season. Health officials are already reporting instances of flu, including the H1N1 (swine) flu virus, in most regions of the United States. The H1N1 virus, a potentially serious health issue for everyone, may be more severe on college campuses because young people up to age 24 are among the most affected.

“The H1N1 (swine flu) virus is a potentially serious health issue for students across the country,” said Tomme Maier, director of Preparedness and Prevention Education. “While the government is uncertain how widespread or severe the H1N1 flu virus will be this year, there are simple things students here in greater Grand Rapids can do right now to prepare for it.”

One thing students can do is get vaccinated. Because the H1N1 and seasonal flu viruses are different, people will need to get separate vaccinations for each flu strain.

Students planning to get the seasonal flu vaccine should do it now. Then, get the H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available (probably in October). Initial vaccination efforts will focus on five groups, including young people between 6 months and 24 years of age.

Other simple steps that can help minimize the spread of the flu on campus are:

- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughs or sneezes. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective when soap and water aren't available.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Cover the nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after use.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Finally, if feeling sick, stay home. Avoid contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others. Flu-like symptoms include fever, coughing, body aches, runny nose, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting or diarrhea. Seek medical attention if symptoms worsen or persist.

Visit the Red Cross Web site, <http://www.redcross.org/pandemicflu>, for more information about the H1N1 flu virus and its possible effects, or check what the CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>, has to say. Both sites contain important up-to-date information on the H1N1 situation and what people should, and shouldn't do during this unusual flu season.

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**About the American Red Cross of Greater Grand Rapids:**

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies nearly half of the nation's blood; teaches lifesaving skills; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization — not a government agency — and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [www.greatergrandrapids.redcross.org](http://www.greatergrandrapids.redcross.org), follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/redcrossggr>, or join our blog at <http://redcrossggr.wordpress.com>.