



Influenza is nothing to sneeze at

Most of us hate getting the flu because it is a week or more of feeling awful and dealing with the symptoms that are part of the disease. Symptoms like coughing, runny nose, fever and a general malaise are all the results of influenza. We get our vaccine and hope for the best and pray no new strain develops during the flu season.

However, for those who suffer from neuromuscular disease, the flu is nothing to sneeze at. Individuals affected by the diseases covered by the Muscular Dystrophy Association are at increased risk of serious and possibly life-threatening complications from the flu. It is very important that everyone stay informed and take steps to protect our families and those with whom we come in contact.

Influenza is a serious and contagious disease. For those with neuromuscular diseases and other chronic health

“Individuals affected by diseases covered by MDA are at increased risk of serious and possibly life-threatening complications from the flu.”

conditions, the best way to deal with the flu is not to contract the illness. Get your flu shot as soon as possible early in the year to lessen the chance that you or someone around you will catch the disease.

In addition to receiving a flu vaccine, here are some tips for limiting the spread the germs and preventing infection:

- Educate family members and roommates about the heightened risk of seasonal and H1N1 influenza for those with neuromuscular disease and the importance of staying away from others who are experiencing flu-like symptoms.
- Promote good hand hygiene among everyone in your home, which means washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice), especially after coughing or

sneezing. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60 percent alcohol also are effective.

- Encourage everyone in your home to practice respiratory etiquette by covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or with your arm. Dispose of tissues in a waste receptacle after use.
- Among your roommates and/or immediate family members, stress the importance of not sharing utensils and drinking cups, and encourage them to avoid touching their faces, especially after handling shared items such as telephones or remote controls.
- Educate yourself about symptoms of the flu—fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, chills and fatigue. Diarrhea and vomiting also may be experienced. Contact your physician as soon as possible if you develop flu-like symptoms.

All our thanks go out to the branches that participated in our first annual “Fill the Satchel” event. Oct. 2 proved to be a great success as reports are coming in from all over the country about the results achieved in many locations. We had a real learning curve because it was the first time that we have

gone directly to the public to raise money for MDA.

Many branches partnered with local food chains that worked with us on the NALC food drive, when local city officials would not approve collecting on the street. Some set up collection points at football games and other sporting events and had great success. I plan on having time at the national convention in Minneapolis to share success stories about Fill the Satchel so we can learn from each other about best practices. Please send me your ideas at NALC Headquarters to help make our next effort even better. We will continue trying new ideas to increase our efforts in the future.

Again, thanks for all you do in these difficult times. With your assistance, MDA can do even more to provide help and hope to those stricken with muscular dystrophy, including the vaccines they urgently need. ✉