

P A N D E M I C

INFLUENZA

Use of Tamiflu for children under the age of one



Why does the government think that Tamiflu is safe for children under one (1) now?

Health Canada has reviewed the available safety data with respect to the use of Tamiflu in children under 1 year old due to the increased incidences of H1N1. It has concluded that the known and potential benefits of Tamiflu outweigh the known and potential risks for children under one year. By providing guidance to doctors to prescribe Tamiflu for young children, we are filling in a gap in terms of treatment availability, dosing information, and we have the opportunity to monitor its effects on children under one and increase our body of knowledge on this drug. Treatment decisions remain with a physician, who would consider prescribing Tamiflu after weighing the potential risks and benefits to any individual patient.

If I have a child that has been diagnosed with H1N1, should I try to get Tamiflu to try to prevent my other children from catching it?

No, the use of antivirals for prevention is recommended only under a limited number of circumstances where the potential benefits outweigh the potential risks. Continued use of antivirals in the absence of illness can result in developing a resistance to the medication. However, these recommendations are not written in stone and decisions have to be made on a case by case basis by the physician involved.

Why wasn't Tamiflu originally recommended for children under one?

There were some safety concerns identified previously from the use of Tamiflu in animal studies. At that time, there was no data available to see the effect of Tamiflu use in infants.

What studies have been done which will assure me that it is safe?

Recently, limited data has become available on the use of Tamiflu in infants (not from formal studies but from physicians using Tamiflu in infants in other countries). An analysis of this data suggests that Tamiflu may be used in emergency situations for the treatment or prevention of influenza infection with the new pandemic virus in infants, if the physician considers that the benefits of using Tamiflu are more than the unknown risks associated with its use.

How long would my child have to take it?

It is very important to use the medicine for as long as your doctor has prescribed it. If you observe any unwanted effects from the use of Tamiflu, talk to your doctor and follow his or her advice to continue or stop taking the drug. If drugs like Tamiflu are stopped before completing the course, there is a danger of developing resistance to the virus, which means that the drug would not work to treat or prevent the infection in the future.

What are the treatment recommendations for this age group, for example if another child in daycare has H1N1 would it be recommended for prevention for all the children in daycare or is it just for treatment of those who are sick?

Public health officials across Canada have agreed that treatment is recommended only for those who are ill, unless they are living in a residential facility.

What would an "adverse reaction" look like?

The most common unwanted effects are nausea, vomiting, pain in the stomach and headache. People infected with the influenza virus, particularly children and adolescents may also develop seizures, confusion, delirium, hallucinations, agitation, anxiety or other abnormal behaviour early during their illness. These events may occur shortly after beginning TAMIFLU or may occur when flu is not treated. These events are uncommon but may result in self-injury to the patient, sometimes fatal. You should watch for unusual behaviour and contact your doctor immediately if such behaviour develops. Parents and health care professionals are encouraged to report serious adverse reactions to their healthcare professional or to Health Canada's Canada Vigilance Program by calling toll-free at 1-866-234-2345.

What do I do if my child has an "adverse reaction" ?

You should contact your doctor immediately if your child experiences develops seizures, confusion, delirium, hallucinations, agitation, anxiety or other abnormal behaviour while taking Tamiflu. Parents and health care professionals are encouraged to report serious adverse reactions to Health Canada's Canada Vigilance Program. Parents and health care professionals are encouraged to report serious adverse reactions to their healthcare professional or to Health Canada's Canada Vigilance Program by calling toll-free at 1-866-234-2345.

Adapted from the Public Health Agency of Canada.