In light of the swine flu outbreak, NADF approached its esteemed Medical Director Paul Margulies, MD, FACE, FACP for advice on steps adrenal insufficient (i.e. Addison’s disease, secondary adrenal insufficiency, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, adrenoleukodystrophy and adrenomyeloneuropathy, et al) patients should take to avoid the swine flu virus, and treat it, if it is contracted.

Dr. Margulies wrote:

“The swine flu is transmitted just like the common influenza - from contact with affected persons and from droplets, exposure to sneezing and coughing, as well as contaminated surfaces. When in public places where exposure is possible, use hand sanitizers after touching public surfaces or wash hands carefully. If you must go into an area with known affected persons, I would suggest wearing a mask.

If anyone develops flu symptoms, especially fever, cough, and severe fatigue, see a doctor or go to an emergency room for a viral culture and for a prescription for one of the available (and highly beneficial) anti-viral medications.

If a family member or close contact develops definite swine flu, I suggest taking the anti-viral medication prophylactically.

If anyone with adrenal insufficiency does get the swine flu, I suggest hospitalization because of the need for IV hydration and extra steroids in addition to the anti-viral medication...."

From NADF News®, VOL. XXIV, No. 2 • 2009

Dr. Margulies’ Vaccination Recommendations

Influenza season is coming fast upon us, and NADF Medical Director Paul Margulies, MD, FACE, FACP recommends that all adrenal insufficient patients (Addison’s disease, 2ndary adrenal insufficiency, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, adrenomyeloneuropathy, et al.) get both the H1N1 (a.k.a. Swine Flu) vaccination when it is available (in early October, is being reported), as well as their regular yearly flu vaccination.

From NADF News®, VOL. XXIV, No. 3 • 2009:

ADDISONIAN’S EXPERIENCE WITH H1N1 (A.K.A. SWINE FLU)

I have adrenal insufficiency, the result of a lack of ACTH from my pituitary, and minor asthma. I just got over swine flu without a hospital stay. I think Dr. Margulies is correct in recommending that younger people need a hospital stay because the flu hits them with a bigger wallop. But the older you are, the milder the flu (though I must admit, I almost checked myself into the hospital because my lungs felt like they were filled with hot desert sand for a couple of days).

The most important thing to do is get on Tamiflu the minute you start to feel even remotely sick, then double your steroid dose (I took four mg Prednisone in the morning and four in the evening) and drink lots of fluids. I was in bed and isolated for 18 days; green tea and soup were my constant companions.

To avoid the flu until you can get an H1N1 shot, the CDC and
my physician recommend the following:

1. Wash hands thoroughly and often. This takes care of 90% (plus) of the virus. Straight rubbing alcohol works too, but the hand sanitizers typically only eliminate bacteria, killing viruses only 40-50% of the time, according to the CDC.

2. Resist all temptations to touch your face unless you’re eating or bathing.

3. Gargle twice a day with warm salt water. H1N1 takes two to three days to proliferate once it hits your system. Water and salt help you wash it away if you become infected. Do not underestimate this simple procedure.

4. Flush out your nostrils at least once every day in an effort to wash away the virus. You can buy a special beaker (called a ‘neti’ pot) for this job at the health food store or at your pharmacy. Use 1/2 tsp. salt with a pinch of baking soda per cup. Pour directly into one nostril, letting the water flow out the other. If you don’t want to do this, then blow your nose hard twice a day and swab both nostrils with cotton buds dipped in warm salt water.

5. Boost your natural immunity with food rich in vitamin C. If you take a supplement, make sure it also has Zinc20 to boost absorption.

6. Drink as much warm liquid, coffee/tea, as you can. They wash off proliferating viruses into the stomach, where they can’t hurt you. Viruses hate warm water.

7. Stock up on tea and soup and liquids that you like but avoid those with sugar in them.

For any disbelievers in annual flu shots, know this: H1N1 is a strain of the 1918 virus that killed millions of people, so getting a regular flu shot now can build your immunity to future outbreaks. According to the CDC, people born before 1957 have partial immunity to this flu, the reason it hits young people (especially those with asthma and autoimmune conditions, like diabetes and Addison’s Disease, so harshly.

I was born after 1957 and survived.

Further information from our kind contributor:

Interestingly, although I’ve had the flu and therefore have some immunity, I could still get it again. What’s worse, I’ve learned you can give the flu to your pets. No one in my household got the flu because I remained sequestered and, when I did commune with family (in the kitchen to prepare my soup) I wore a hospital issued mouth and nose guard and wore surgical gloves, making sure I washed all nobs touched with rubbing alcohol. (The virus can live up to seven hours on any given surface, so it’s a tenacious bugger.)

Q.“I have heard that no one with autoimmune disease should EVER submit to live vaccine, because live vaccines stir up cytokines & very often cause antibodies to go on a rampage.”

A. “There is no clear evidence that the live virus immunization unsafe for Addisonians. However, the injection has fewer annoying side effects, so I suggest the killed virus vaccine for Addisonians rather than the live virus.”
Q. “Hello, I am a 64 year old woman who has had Addison’s disease for 36 years. I am very unsure about getting the H1N1 vaccine. I have read that this virus may have been around before and that older people may have already been exposed and have an immunity to it. Would there be any harmful affects to getting the injection if you already have an immunity? I have also been told that if you have other certain conditions (I have fibromyalgia), that the vaccine could worsen those conditions. I was wondering if you could ask Dr. Margulies for me. Thank you.”

A. “If the H1N1 flu vaccine is available to you, there is no reason you should not take it. Even if you had been exposed to the virus in the past, there is no harm in taking the vaccination now. There is no contraindication except allergy to eggs.”

Uph published Q & A's:

Q. "In today’s Press & Sun Bulletin--First swine flu vaccines may be nasal spray, CDC reports Sixth paragraph: Flu shots are made of killed influenza virus, while FluMist is a live but weakened strain. I have been told by numerous sources that addisonians should not be inoculated with vaccines, etc., made from live virus. Pretty sure I had found it years ago in Merck. Therefore, it is okay for us to receive the shot, but not the nasal spray, correct? And we should be very clear to ask for the dead virus shot? Thanks"

A. "There is no clear evidence that the live virus immunization unsafe for Addisonians. However, the injection has fewer annoying side effects."

Q. Are Addisonian's still discouraged from getting the flu-mist or other live virus immunizations?"

A. “No problem with either one, but most people get the killed virus shot.”

That's all we have.

I also have auto-immune Addison's disease, along with hypothyroidism. I have gotten the flu vaccinations since I was diagnosed in 1988, and the last two years I have also gotten the H1N1 vaccinations.

I have heard some nightmarish stories about people and their experiences with the H1N1 influenza.

We think that there was a death of a young (teenage) Addisonian from the illness last year.

Although it is possible that vaccinations may be a catalyst for auto-immune illnesses, I personally would rather LIVE with hypothyroidism (the auto-immune condition that I acquired after regular flu shots, although I am not claiming any connection, but who knows) then die from the H1N1 illness.

Other more dangerous auto-immune conditions, like Lupus or sarcoidosis, et. al.? I personally don't worry about it. Call me crazy.

I hope the items listed above help you.

Best -

Melanie :D