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About Health Canada

Consumers Advised Against Counterfeit and Unapproved H1N1 Flu Virus (Human Swine Flu) Products

Advisory

2009-65

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For immediate release

OTTAWA - Health Canada is advising Canadians not to purchase products claiming to fight or prevent H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu). While there are approved antiviral drugs that may help prevent or reduce the symptoms associated with the flu in general, there are currently no products authorized for sale in Canada that are indicated specifically for the treatment of H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu).

Antivirals such as Tamiflu (oseltamivir) or Relenza (zanamivir), which are authorized in Canada, can be effective in the prevention or early treatment of influenza. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends limited use of antivirals to treat H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) and only on the recommendation of the patient's doctor when the illness is moderate to severe and if the patient is at high risk of complications of influenza. If taken within 48 hours after getting sick, these drugs can help reduce symptoms, shorten the length of illness and potentially reduce serious complications. Antivirals should only be purchased with a prescription from a health care practitioner who has examined the patient.

Consumers should not purchase products claiming to be "generic" versions of drugs sold under the brand names Tamiflu or Relenza as Health Canada has not authorized generic versions of these drugs. They should also be extremely cautious if buying these drugs over the Internet. While there are legitimate Canadian Internet pharmacies, consumers should be aware of the risks associated with buying drugs online. For more information on the subject, Health Canada has developed an It's Your Health article on [Buying Drugs over the Internet](#).

Taking unapproved or counterfeit drugs could pose serious risks to health. These products may contain active ingredients not listed on the label or dangerous additives, and could cause serious side effects. Authorized health products will display either an eight-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN), a Natural Product Number (NPN), or a Homeopathic Medicine Number (DIN-HM) on the label. This authorization indicates that the products have been assessed by Health Canada for safety, effectiveness and quality.

H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) is a respiratory illness that causes symptoms similar to those of the regular human seasonal flu. Symptoms can be similar to seasonal flu and include headache, chills, cough followed by fever, loss of appetite, muscle aches and fatigue, runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and throat irritation. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also occur. In more severe cases, or in people with chronic conditions, complications such as pneumonia may develop.

There are simple measures you can take to protect yourself and your family against H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu). The Public Health Agency of Canada advises Canadians to wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water, or use hand sanitizer, cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve, stay home when sick, get your annual flu shot, and talk to a health professional if you experience flu-like symptoms.

Canadians are encouraged to stay informed on H1N1 flu virus (human swine flu) by visiting the [Public Health Agency of Canada's website](#), or calling the toll-free public information line at 1-800-454-8302.

Canadians with questions or complaints about counterfeit drugs and / or drugs purchased over the Internet can call Health Canada's toll-free line at 1-800-267-9675.

Health Canada issued an [advisory](#) about the online purchase of Tamiflu in December 2005.

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