

Why Get Vaccinated Against H1N1

Why should I get H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine?

Vaccine provides the best protection against influenza infections. A flu vaccine stimulates the immune system in your body to produce antibodies to remove the virus "intruder." It protects you against the viruses that are included in the vaccine, and may give you some protection against very similar viruses.

2009 H1N1 flu illness has ranged from mild to severe. Most people have recovered without needing medical treatment. However, hospitalizations and deaths have occurred. Young children, pregnant women, and people with certain chronic medical conditions (see below) are at increased risk for severe illness.

Who Should Get Vaccinated Against H1N1

Who should get the H1N1 vaccine *first*?

Persons who are at highest risk for complications from H1N1 flu should be vaccinated *first*, including:

- Pregnant women
- People between the ages of 6 months and 24 years
- People between the ages of 25 through 64 years of age with chronic health conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, neurological conditions or weakened immune systems.

Persons who are taking care of those people with highest risk for complications should also be vaccinated *first*, including:

- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency workers because they need to stay well so they do not pass flu on to patients and are available to take care of a larger number of patients in case of an H1N1 outbreak.

Will there be enough H1N1 vaccine for everyone?

Yes, there should be enough vaccine for everyone who needs and wants it. We are receiving about 550,000 doses of the vaccine, enough for about 60% of the population. In a typical year a much lower percent of people receive flu vaccine. High priority groups (see above) will be vaccinated first to protect those who are at highest risk for flu-related complications.

Should infants under six months of age get H1N1 vaccine?

No. Infants under six months of age cannot get H1N1 vaccine. This is why it is important for everyone living with or caring for infants under six months to be vaccinated for H1N1. Please protect infants against H1N1 flu by getting vaccinated.

Should pregnant women get H1N1 vaccine?

Yes, pregnant women should be vaccinated against H1N1 flu and seasonal flu. A pregnant woman who gets any type of flu is at risk for serious complications. Severe illness and death from H1N1 has occurred in pregnant women, even those women who were previously healthy. *Remember that vaccine is the single most important way to protect against the flu.*

What kind of H1N1 vaccine should pregnant women get?

Pregnant women should get the “injectable” flu shot that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The H1N1 flu “shot” is approved for use in pregnant women.

The other type of flu vaccine (nasal spray flu vaccine) is a live virus and should not be given to pregnant women.

Who is approved for H1N1 “nasal spray” vaccine?

H1N1 nasal spray vaccine is approved for people from 2 years through 49 years of age who are *not* pregnant and do *not* have a weakened immune system, heart or lung disease, asthma, kidney or liver disease, diabetes, blood disorders like anemia, or a neuromuscular condition like cerebral palsy. Children or adolescents on long-term aspirin therapy should *not* receive it. Anyone who is in close contact with a person with a severely compromised immune system should *not* get “nasal spray” vaccine. If you do not know if you should or should not get H1N1 nasal spray vaccine, please talk with your health care provider.

Why aren't senior citizens in one of the priority groups?

People over 50 years of age (and especially those over 64 years) are more at risk for complications from seasonal flu than for H1N1 flu. People over 64 years have had much lower rates of serious illness, hospitalization, and death from H1N1 flu than the rest of the public. People over 64 may have been exposed to a similar virus early in life that has given them a stronger ability to fight against H1N1 flu. However, after the high risk target groups have had time to be immunized, vaccine may be made available to those people over 64 years.

People aged 65 and older are included as a priority group if they live with or care for infants younger than 6 months or are a health care worker or emergency medical service provider.

How many doses of H1N1 vaccine are needed?

Children over six months through 9 years of age should get 2 doses of vaccine about a month apart. Older children and adults need only one dose.

Safety of H1N1 Vaccines

How safe are the H1N1 influenza vaccines?

The H1N1 vaccines were developed using the same processes and testing as the seasonal flu vaccines. Seasonal flu vaccines have an excellent safety record. Over the years, millions of Americans and people worldwide have safely received seasonal flu vaccines. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) expect the H1N1 vaccine to be just as safe as the seasonal flu vaccine.

Will I get flu from the H1N1 vaccine?

No, flu vaccines cannot cause the flu. The viruses contained in flu shots are inactivated (dead), which means they cannot cause infection.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The nasal spray vaccine contains a weakened live virus that is designed to cause a mild infection of the nose and throat to produce immune system response to protect against serious flu infections. In children, side effects may include runny nose, headache, wheezing, vomiting, muscle aches and fever. In adults, side effects may include runny nose, headache, sore throat, and cough. Fever is not a common side effect in adults receiving the nasal spray flu vaccine.

Are there side effects from H1N1 vaccine?

Most people will not have side effects. When people do have side effects, they are usually mild, begin soon after getting the shot and last 1 to 2 days. In adults the main side effects are soreness, redness, or swelling of the arm at the injection site. A few children may develop mild fever and/or muscle aches.

Has H1N1 vaccine been adequately tested?

H1N1 vaccine was developed using the same manufacturing processes and product testing as those used to develop seasonal flu vaccines. The age groups, precautions, and contraindications are identical to those approved for seasonal flu. The testing of vaccine on humans indicate that the safety of H1N1 vaccines are similar to those of seasonal flu. Because rare side effects can only be detected when very large numbers of persons get vaccinated, there are monitoring systems in place to detect any unexpected side effects once the vaccine is in use.

Is thimerosal in H1N1 vaccine safe?

Thimerosal is a form of mercury and used as a preservative in vaccines to prevent bacterial contamination. Thimerosal has not been shown to cause autism or any health problems. A 2004 report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science concluded that the thimerosal in vaccines does not cause autism, a conclusion also reached by scientists in many countries around the world. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Institute of Medicine have concluded, based on scientific research, that thimerosal-containing vaccines are safe.

Does all H1N1 vaccine contain thimerosal?

Multidose vials of H1N1 vaccine contain thimerosal. Multidose vials of seasonal flu also contain thimerosal to prevent potential contamination after the vial is open.

H1N1 nasal spray vaccine does not contain thimerosal. Single dose units of H1N1 vaccine do not contain thimerosal. However, single dose units are prioritized for pregnant women and children under 3 years of age. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk with your health care provider.

Vaccine providers are required by law to inform people that the vaccine they use has thimerosal in it.

Can persons who are allergic to eggs receive 2009 H1N1 vaccine?

The H1N1 vaccines available in the United States are produced using chicken eggs and do contain residual egg protein. *People should not be vaccinated against H1N1 if they have a severe (life threatening) allergy to eggs.*

Is there any latex in multi-dose H1N1 vaccine stoppers?

No, there is no latex used in the H1N1 vaccines or vaccine stoppers that are available in the United States which include those vaccines made by Sanofi-Pasteur, Novartis, CSL, and GlaxoSmithKline.

How and Where to get H1N1 Vaccine

Where can I get my H1N1 vaccination?

Once the vaccine is available, most people will be able to get their H1N1 flu vaccine from their medical providers or a local pharmacy. Please continue to check Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department's website for more information: www.tpchd.org

How much will H1N1 vaccine cost?

H1N1 flu vaccine is provided free of cost by our federal government. Provider offices/pharmacies that provide flu vaccinations may only charge for administering the vaccine. This charge should not exceed the Washington State Medicare rate of \$20.43.

For ways to be **healthier, safer and smarter** during flu season, see our H1N1 page: www.tpchd.org/H1N1 or email questions to info@tpchd.org and someone will reply with an answer.