

## **H1N1 Vaccination**

### **(Facts about the Vaccine and its Safety)**

#### **Why is a vaccine needed for H1N1?**

H1N1 is a new flu virus that can be passed from person to person in much the same way as the seasonal flu virus. Most people have little or no immunity to H1N1, so it could cause even more infections than the seasonal virus. It poses an added threat to people who are at higher risk for complications from the flu.

Vaccines are our best defense against infectious diseases. Like any medication, a vaccine can cause side effects and pose risks. However, a decision NOT to be vaccinated also poses a risk to you and others.

#### **Who should receive the H1N1 vaccine?**

At this time, the CDC defines the following as priority groups needing to receive this vaccine:

- Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications. Their vaccination can help protect their infants who cannot be vaccinated.
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 6 months of age because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated.
- Health care and emergency services personnel because they can spread the virus to patients and to each other.
- All persons 6 months through 24 years old:
  - Children 6 months through 18 years of age because they are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings and can spread the disease
  - Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because they often live, work, and study in close proximity.
- Persons 25 through 64 years of age who have health conditions that increase their risk of complications from influenza.

#### **Who should NOT receive this vaccine?**

People who have a severe (life-threatening) allergy to chicken eggs or to any other substance in the vaccine should not be vaccinated.

#### **Won't the seasonal flu vaccine protect me against H1N1?**

No. The H1N1 virus is a new strain that is not included in the seasonal flu vaccine. Likewise, the H1N1 vaccine does not replace the seasonal flu vaccine, but is to be given in addition.

#### **Is the H1N1 vaccine “experimental”?**

No. The vaccine is not new or experimental. It is just a different strain that is not currently in the seasonal flu vaccine. The H1N1 vaccine is produced using the same processes and facilities as the seasonal flu vaccine. And the H1N1 vaccine is licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), based on the same standards as the seasonal flu vaccine.

#### **So the H1N1 vaccine will be safe?**

The CDC expects the H1N1 vaccine to be as safe as the seasonal flu vaccine, which has been given to hundreds of millions of Americans over the years. The risk of a vaccine causing serious harm is very small. Life-threatening allergic reactions from vaccines are very rare.

The CDC expects that any side effects from the H1N1 vaccine would be mild and would last only 1 to 2 days. Mild problems that may occur include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where a shot was given
- Fainting (mainly adolescents)
- Headache, muscle aches
- Fever
- Nausea

### **What if I have a more serious reaction?**

Again, a serious problem from the vaccine would be rare. But the CDC recommends that you watch for any unusual reaction. Call your health care provider right away if you have any unusual reaction, such as:

- High fever
- Changes in your behavior
- Signs of a severe allergic reaction, such as trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, swelling around the eyes or lips, hives, paleness, weakness, fast heartbeat, or dizziness (these signs would usually occur within a few minutes to a few hours)

### **Will the CDC and FDA keep monitoring the H1N1 vaccine?**

Definitely. The CDC and FDA will closely watch for any signs that the vaccine is causing adverse events. Continuous monitoring helps detect reactions that are so rare they are not found during testing before the vaccine is licensed. Usually, monitoring vaccine safety finds that there are no serious reactions that have been missed in earlier testing of a new vaccine.

### **Is there a risk for Guillian Barre Syndrome from the H1N1 vaccine?**

In 1976 there was a small risk of Guillian Barre Syndrome (GBS) following vaccination for swine flu (about 1 additional case per 100,000 people who received the swine flu vaccine). Guillian Barre Syndrome is a rare disease causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis.

Since then, numerous have found no link between flu vaccine and GBS, but two studies suggested that about 1 additional person out of 1 million vaccinated people may be at risk for GBS associated with the seasonal influenza vaccine. The FDA and CDC will closely monitor reports of serious problems following the 2009 H1N1 vaccine, including GBS.

### **If the FDA licensed the H1N1 vaccine, why are “clinical trials” being conducted?**

The clinical trials are not related to licensing the vaccine. The National Institutes of Health and the manufacturers who make the vaccine are conducting the trials in order to determine proper dosage and whether or not the seasonal and H1N1 vaccines can be given at the same time.

### **When will the H1N1 vaccine be ready?**

The CDC expects the vaccine to be available in mid-October.

### **Will the 2009 H1N1 vaccine contain thimerosal?**

The vaccine will be available in several forms, some of which will be thimerosal-free. Talk with your health care provider if you have questions or concerns about thimerosal.

### **Can I get the H1N1 vaccine at the same time as my seasonal flu vaccine?**

YES. The seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines can be given on the same day. However, the seasonal flu vaccine will probably be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. The CDC recommends that people receive their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as possible, once it is available.

### **What if I was vaccinated against the 1976 swine flu?**

You should still get the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. The two viruses are different enough that it's unlikely you would have full protection from the 1976 vaccine.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Always talk with your health care provider if you have questions or concerns about flu vaccination. Also, for up-to-date news and information, visit:

- [www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu)
- [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)