

NOVEL H1N1 VACCINE 2009-2010 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What is nH1N1?

Novel H1N1 (sometimes referred to as “swine flu”) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. It was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

What is the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) role in the nH1N1 vaccine?

The role of HDHHS is to act as a “safety net” for anyone who does not have access to a private health care provider. Novel H1N1 vaccine will be available at HDHHS Health Clinics when the vaccine arrives.

Where will the nH1N1 vaccines be given?

Primary care physicians, Health Department Clinics, Federally Qualified Health Clinics, Community Health Clinics/Centers and commercial chain pharmacies are all able to distribute vaccine.

What are the Target Priority Groups?

- **Pregnant women** because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated
- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age** because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants less than 6 months old might help protect infants by “cocooning” them from the virus;
- **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel** because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity
- **Children from 6 months through 18 years of age** because we have seen many cases of nH1N1 influenza in children and they are in close contact in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread, and
- **Young adults 19 through 24 years of age** because we have seen many cases of nH1N1 influenza in healthy young adults as they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and are a frequently mobile population.
- **Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza, such as chronic lung problems like asthma, heart, liver, blood, nervous system, muscular, or metabolic disorders such as diabetes.**

Are we expecting a shortage of nH1N1 vaccine?

We do not expect that there will be a shortage of nH1N1 vaccine, but flu vaccine availability and demand can be unpredictable and there is some possibility that initially, the vaccine will be available in limited quantities.

If I don't fall under the Target Priority Groups will I be able to receive the nH1N1 vaccine?

Once the demand for vaccine for the prioritized groups has been met, programs and providers will begin vaccinating everyone from the ages of 25 through 64 years.

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Do I have to receive the nH1N1 vaccine?

No, you do not have to receive the vaccine if you do not want it.

Why should I get the nH1N1 vaccine?

You should receive the nH1N1 vaccine because most people do not yet have immunity to the virus. If you have already been exposed, but are not yet sick, your illness likely will be less severe.

If I get the vaccine, does that mean that I won't get nH1N1?

If you develop nH1N1 you will usually get a milder case.

What is the difference between seasonal flu and this new strain of nH1N1?

Seasonal flu viruses have been circulating in human populations for several seasons, allowing people to build up immunities to them. Most people do not yet have immunity to the new strain of nH1N1 flu.

Do I have to pay for the nH1N1 shot?

No. The vaccine is free to anyone who wants to receive it.

How often should I get the nH1N1 vaccine?

Right now it appears everyone over the age of 10 will need to receive 1 dose of nH1N1. Children under 10 will need to receive 2 doses, 1 month apart.

Is there anyone who should *not* get the vaccine?

Certain people should consult with their physician before getting the vaccine. These people include those who are allergic to eggs or to a previous dose of influenza vaccine and those who have a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

What are the risks from the vaccine?

Some soreness, redness, or swelling at the site of the injection may occur. Fever and aches may also occur soon after the shot is given and last 1-2 days.

What if there is a moderate or severe reaction?

If there is a moderate reaction call your doctor and let them know what is going on. If there is a severe reaction including difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart rate or dizziness call a doctor or get the person to a doctor right away. Be sure to tell the doctor what happened, the date and time, and when the vaccination was given.

When is the peak flu season?

Flu season usually peaks in Houston anywhere from December through March. Novel H1N1 is expected to cause a rise in cases earlier this flu season.

Will the nH1N1 vaccine protect me from the seasonal flu?

No, you must receive the seasonal flu vaccine for protection from the seasonal flu strains and the nH1N1 vaccine for protection from the nH1N1 strain.

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For more information, please visit www.HoustonH1N1.org