

Pandemic H1N1-2009 (H1N1) Influenza Vaccine

Please note: A different vaccine is required to protect against seasonal flu virus. Vaccination with the H1N1 flu vaccine is recommended now, followed by vaccination with the seasonal influenza vaccine for everyone who has not yet received it.

What is pandemic H1N1 influenza?

Pandemic H1N1 influenza, like seasonal influenza, is caused by a virus. People who get H1N1 influenza have a sudden onset of fever and cough with sore throat, tiredness, headache, and muscle aches. Most people are sick for two to seven days, although, the cough may last for weeks. Most people will only suffer from a mild illness. Those at a somewhat increased risk of complications when they get infected are children less than five years of age, people with other medical problems, pregnant women, women who had a baby in the past few weeks, and people who are very over weight.

How does H1N1 influenza spread?

Influenza spreads very easily from an infected person through coughing and sneezing. It is also spread by direct contact with contaminated surfaces or objects and with unwashed hands.

How can I protect myself and my family?

H1N1 influenza vaccine is about 70 to 90% effective in preventing H1N1 influenza in healthy children and adults who are vaccinated. It is expected that the vaccine can also prevent pneumonia, hospitalization, and death in some people who become ill with H1N1 influenza. People who receive the vaccine may still get H1N1 influenza, but if they do, it is expected to be milder than it would have been without the H1N1 vaccine.

How many doses are required?

Individuals 10 years of age and older require one dose of H1N1 influenza vaccine. Children six months to nine years of age require two doses of vaccine at least three weeks apart.

Who should get the H1N1 vaccine?

It is recommended that everyone who is six months of age or older be vaccinated with the H1N1 influenza vaccine. Due to limited vaccine availability, the province has determined priority groups for receiving the vaccine.

Who should not receive H1N1 influenza vaccine?

- Infants under six months of age
- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to eggs (hives, swelling of the mouth or throat, difficulty breathing, and/or shock)
- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of influenza or other vaccine
- Anyone who has a serious allergy to any of the vaccine contents
- Anyone with an allergy to fish should discuss the vaccine with their health care provider

Who should wait to be vaccinated?

- Anyone who is ill with a fever
- Anyone who has a neurological condition that is not yet stabilized
- Anyone who has had an illness called Guillain-Barré Syndrome should talk to his or her health care provider before being vaccinated

After vaccination

Please remain in the clinic follow-up area for at least 15 minutes following vaccination.

A few people have minor side effects, usually lasting one or two days following vaccination:

- Redness or soreness where the needle was given
- Slight muscle aches, tiredness, or fever

During the 2000-2001 influenza season, a small number of people who received the seasonal influenza vaccine developed a side effect called Oculorespiratory Syndrome or ORS. ORS is described as the onset of red eyes and/or respiratory symptoms (cough, wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness or sore throat) and/or swelling of the face, occurring **within 24 hours** of influenza immunization. Since 2000-2001, fewer cases of ORS have been reported.

Persons who experienced ORS symptoms in the past may be safely re-immunized with influenza vaccine **except for** those who have experienced ORS with severe **lower** respiratory symptoms (wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing) within 24 hours of influenza immunization. These individuals should seek expert medical advice before being immunized again with influenza vaccine.

More serious reactions are very rare. Tell the clinic nurse or seek medical attention **immediately** if you have any of the following:

- Hives
- Trouble breathing
- Swelling of the face
- Wheezing or chest tightness
- Unusual weakness, fast heartbeat, or dizziness

An illness called Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), which causes muscle weakness and paralysis, has occurred very rarely after influenza vaccination and also very rarely after a viral infection.

Pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine does not:

- Protect against colds or influenza virus strains other than H1N1
- Make you sick with H1N1 influenza because it does not contain live virus

For more information

Contact the Health Unit at 1-866-888-4577.

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