

Questions & Answers: H1N1 Influenza Vaccine from the Medina County Health Department

The H1N1 influenza (flu) virus, formerly known as Swine Flu, is currently causing illness in people throughout the United States and countries around the world, causing the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic.

The following information was obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

We encourage you to keep up-to-date by visiting www.flu.gov.

Q. How much does the H1N1 flu vaccine cost?

A. The H1N1 flu vaccine is free of charge.

Q. What is the difference between seasonal flu and the H1N1 flu?

A. The 2009 H1N1 flu is a new flu virus. It is very different from seasonal flu viruses. Most people have little or no immunity to 2009 H1N1 flu (their bodies are not prepared to fight off the virus).

Q. Who should receive the H1N1 flu vaccine?

A. Everyone (with some exceptions such as people with allergies to the vaccine) should receive the H1N1 flu vaccine. The H1N1 flu vaccine will protect you and your family and by getting the H1N1 flu vaccine, you can help stop the spread of H1N1 flu in our community.

Q. Can the seasonal vaccine and the H1N1 flu vaccine be given at the same time?

A. The H1N1 nasal spray flu vaccine can be given at the same time or around the same time as an inactivated (killed) vaccine or any other live vaccine except for the seasonal flu nasal spray vaccine. (The seasonal nasal spray vaccine and the 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine *should not be given at the same time.*) The 2009 H1N1 flu shot (inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine) can be given at the same visit as any other vaccine. If you have received a seasonal flu mist or other live vaccine, you must wait 28 days to receive an H1N1 flu nasal spray vaccine.

Q. Where will the H1N1 flu vaccine be available?

A. Check our website at www.medinahhealth.org for H1N1 flu clinic information or call our information line toll-free at 1-888-723-9688.

Q. What happened with the 1976 Swine Flu Vaccine?

A. In 1976, an earlier type of swine flu vaccine was associated with cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS). Since then, flu vaccines have not been clearly linked to GBS.

Q. Will you be offering nasal spray or injectable H1N1 flu vaccine?

A. The Medina County Health Department has been receiving both kinds of vaccine. Check our website at www.medinahhealth.org for up-to-date information about what kinds of H1N1 flu vaccine are available or call our information line toll-free at 1-888-723-9688.

Q. Should pregnant or breastfeeding mothers get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?

A. Millions of pregnant and breastfeeding women have safely used seasonal flu vaccines for many decades. Although the H1N1 vaccine is new, it was developed using the same process and is expected to be safe. Women who are breastfeeding can get the 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine or inactivated H1N1 shot. Women who are pregnant can get the inactivated H1N1 shot.

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Q. Are the H1N1 flu vaccines safe?

A. All four manufacturers of the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccines are using the same processes that they use for making seasonal flu vaccines, which have a long record of producing safe seasonal influenza vaccines.

Q. What is the difference between the live/attenuated nasal spray vs. killed/inactivated injectable H1N1 flu vaccine?

A. Both types of H1N1 flu vaccine are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and effectively prevent the H1N1 flu. Some people cannot have the nasal spray vaccine. The following people cannot receive the Live Nasal Spray Vaccine:

- Anyone over 49 years of age
- Anyone allergic to eggs or any other substance in the vaccine
- Pregnant women
- Anyone with a weakened immune system
- People with heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, lung disease, asthma, diabetes, blood diseases, and neuromuscular disorders
- Anyone in close contact with a person with a severely weakened immune system
- Children or teens on long-term aspirin treatment
- Anyone who had a live vaccine less than 28 days ago, such as seasonal flu mist, MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), or varicella (chicken pox) vaccine.

Q. How many H1N1 doses do children need? Single or multiple dose?

A. Children younger than 10 years should receive two doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. This is slightly different from CDC's recommendations for seasonal influenza vaccination, which state that children younger than 9 who are being vaccinated against influenza for the first time need to receive two doses. Infants younger than 6 months of age are too young to get the 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines. CDC recommends that the two doses of 2009 H1N1 vaccine be separated by 28 days.

Q. Will you provide a thimerosal-free vaccine?

A. The 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccines that FDA approved will be manufactured in several formulations. Some will come in multi-dose vials and will contain thimerosal as a preservative. Multi-dose vials of seasonal influenza vaccine also contain thimerosal to prevent potential contamination after the vial is opened. Some vaccine manufacturers will be producing 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine in single-dose units, which will not require the use of thimerosal as a preservative. In addition, the nasal spray version of the vaccine is produced in single-units and will not contain thimerosal. Ask Medina County Health Department medical staff about the availability of thimerosal-free flu vaccine.



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