



H1N1 Frequently Asked Questions

Who should get vaccinated first against H1N1?

The following are the current priority groups to receive the vaccine:

- Pregnant women
- Healthcare workers with direct patient contact
- Parents or caregivers of children less than 6 months old
- Children and young adults aged 6 months to 24 years
- Adults aged 25 – 64 years with chronic medical conditions that put them at higher risk for developing flu-related complications, such as chronic lung disease (like asthma), heart disease, diabetes, spinal cord or muscle illness that causes problems with breathing or swallowing, HIV, kidney disease, liver disease, blood disorders, or any person that has any disease or takes any medication that affects the immune system

When will everyone be able to be vaccinated?

As of 12/10/09, everyone in Colorado is eligible for the H1N1 vaccine.

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe?

The H1N1 vaccine is made the same way that normal seasonal flu vaccine is made. We do not expect that there will be any differences in the safety of the vaccine. In the clinical trials, the most common side effect from the shot was redness and soreness at the injection site.

Does the vaccine have preservatives like thimerosal?

There is no evidence linking preservatives like thimerosal to any negative outcomes. The nasal spray and some of the shots will be preservative free. Other shots will contain thimerosal. If you have any questions or concerns, contact your primary care provider.

Does the vaccine have any adjuvants like squalene?

An adjuvant is something that is added to the vaccine to make it stronger so that less vaccine can be used, but produce the same protection. None of the vaccine that was ordered for the United States contains adjuvants.

Is there anyone who can't get vaccinated?

Babies younger than 6 months of age can not get vaccinated and those people who have a severe allergy to eggs shouldn't be vaccinated. If you're unsure about your allergy, contact your primary care provider to make a decision about being vaccinated.

Are there different kinds of H1N1 vaccine?

Yes, there are two different kinds of vaccine:

1. FluMist is a nasal spray that will be given to people between 2 and 49 years of age, who are not pregnant and who do not have certain medical conditions.
2. A vaccine shot will only be given to members of the above priority groups not eligible for FluMist.

I've heard that getting the flu shot can make you sick. Is that true?

No, it isn't true. The virus in the flu shot is dead and can not cause illness. The reason why some people believe this is that people normally get vaccinated during the fall or winter when people are more likely to catch colds.

Isn't the nasal spray live virus? Can't I spread it to other people?

The nasal spray is a live virus, but it is a much weakened version of the virus. It has been changed so that it can only live in the nose and can't live in the lungs to make people sick. It is very unlikely that it can be transmitted to another person. The only time we worry about transmitting the weakened virus to someone is if they have a severely weakened immune system (like a transplant patient).

How many shots/doses do I need?

If you are 9 years old or younger, you will need to get two doses of the vaccine at least 28 days apart. If you are 10 years old or older, you just need one dose of the vaccine.

Can I get the seasonal vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine at the same time?

Yes, as long as one of them is a shot. You can't get two nasal sprays at the same time.

What if I got vaccines recently? Can I still get vaccinated against H1N1?

Yes, you can still receive the H1N1 vaccine. In some cases you will only be able to receive the shot and not the H1N1 FluMist. This happens if you recently got certain vaccines like: Varicella (chickenpox shot), MMR (measles, mumps rubella shot) or seasonal FluMist. Contact your primary care provider if you're not sure.

Who will have the H1N1 vaccine?

Many doctors, pharmacies and public health will all have the H1N1 vaccine.

How can I find a clinic to get vaccinated?

Ask your doctor if he or she has the H1N1 vaccine. You can also find public health clinics on your health department's website. If you live in Adams, Arapahoe or Douglas Counties, you can check www.tchd.org or call 303-220-9200 for the latest clinic information.

What if I have a health condition that qualifies me to be in the priority group to be vaccinated. Do I need a note from my doctor?

No, you do not need a note from your doctor. But please be prepared to explain what medical condition places you in the high priority group.

I heard there is a shortage of H1N1 vaccine? Is that true?

There seems to be some delays in the manufacturing of the vaccine that might lead to less vaccine initially. However, we expect that the issues will be fixed and we will have enough vaccine in the coming months.

I know a lot of people who have been sick. Isn't it too late to be vaccinated?

It's not too late to be vaccinated. People get sick at different times. Even in areas that have had a lot of influenza activity, studies suggest that only about 5-10% of the population have been affected. That leaves a lot of people that could still get sick. In past pandemic influenza, illness came in different "waves" and we don't know what might happen in the future with H1N1. The best protection we have against influenza is vaccination.

I was already sick and I think I had H1N1. Do I need to get vaccinated?

There are many different illnesses that can have similar symptoms to influenza. Even if you think you had H1N1, we still recommend that you get vaccinated to be on the safe side.

The flu isn't that bad....I'm just going to wait until myself or my kids catch it rather than get vaccinated.

The current information we have about H1N1 is that the illness is relatively mild for most individuals. However, it can still knock people out for several days where they can not work or go to school. And, unfortunately in some cases, people will be hospitalized with severe illness and some people will die. Getting vaccinated can prevent the most severe consequences of the flu.