

Responses to Questions about Influenza Frequently asked by Parents and Others

Should my child get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Yes. CDC recommends that everyone get the seasonal flu vaccine in addition to the H1N1 flu vaccine.

Should my child get a second dose of the seasonal flu vaccine?

Yes. Children 8 years and younger receiving the flu vaccine for the first time will get up to 80% immunity from the first flu vaccine. They need the second dose to assure full immunity. There is a 28 day wait period between the first and second doses regardless of whether they received the first dose as nasal spray or injection.

Where can my child get the seasonal flu vaccine (first or second dose)?

You can get the seasonal flu vaccine, first or second dose, from your private health care provider, at community clinics and at the School Health Services Center. (See attached list)

Can you get the seasonal and H1N1 vaccines at the same time?

Yes. Because H1N1 is the predominant strain of influenza circulating right now, DHMH and CDC recommend that the focus for vaccination be on H1N1.

Getting the seasonal flu vaccine does not prevent you from receiving the H1N1 vaccine. If you have received the nasal spray form of seasonal flu vaccine (FluMist) you must wait a minimum of 28 days before getting the nasal spray form of the H1N1 vaccine.

You can get the injectable form of H1N1 vaccine at anytime before, during, or after receiving the seasonal FluMist or seasonal Flu Shot.

How long can the flu virus survive?

The flu virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person for 2-8 hours after being deposited on that surface. It is destroyed by heat and several chemical germicides including

- Chlorine
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Detergents (soap)
- Iodophors (iodine-based antiseptics)
- Alcohols

How does the H1N1 influenza spread?

H1N1 influenza spreads the same way that seasonal flu spreads:

- Person to person
- Coughing or sneezing of infected individuals
- Touching surfaces with flu viruses on them and then touching mouth or nose

How contagious is the H1N1 flu?

Infected people shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after.

Do I need to go to the doctor if I have a fever and a cough?

Not necessarily. If you have fever sore throat and/or cough but none of the warning signs (see below) and are not considered to be high risk, stay at home and recover.

What are the risk factors everyone talks about?

People who have chronic health conditions including chronic pulmonary disease (including asthma), cardiovascular (except hypertension), kidney, liver, cognitive, neurologic/neuromuscular, hematologic or metabolic disorders (including diabetes mellitus) or immunosuppression are at greater risk for complications from H1N1.

When should I go to the Emergency Room?

You should go to the Emergency Room if you have any of the **Emergency warning signs**:

Emergency warning signs in children that need urgent medical attention:

- **Fast breathing or trouble breathing**
- **Bluish or gray skin color**
- **Not drinking enough fluids**
- **Severe or persistent vomiting**
- **Difficulty arousing**
- **Not interacting**
- **Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held**
- **Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough**

Adult emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention

- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen**
- **Sudden dizziness**
- **Confusion**
- **Severe or persistent vomiting**
- **Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough**

When can students return to school?

Students should wait until they have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of medications such as tylenol or ibuprofen before returning to school.

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe?

Yes, clinical trials have shown the vaccine to be safe. The H1N1 vaccine is made the same way seasonal flu vaccine is made.

Who should get the H1N1 vaccine?

Everyone should get both vaccines – seasonal and H1N1 – as they become available.

Because the H1N1 vaccine will initially be in limited supply, the CDC has recommended that individuals the most at risk for getting the H1N1 flu or having serious complications from the H1N1 flu get the vaccine first. These groups are:

Target groups for vaccines – based on what we have seen so far

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact
- Persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old
- People 25-64 who are at higher risk because of chronic health disorders

Priority groups for vaccine – if there is initially not enough to go around

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact
- Children from 6 months through 4 years
- Persons 5 years through 18 years who have chronic medical conditions