



The H1N1 Flu Shot Fact Sheet

What is the H1N1 virus?

The H1N1 flu virus is a new strain of influenza. Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. The H1N1 flu virus is generally mild and people usually recover in a few days. Some people can get very ill from the H1N1 virus and may need hospital care. H1N1 virus is different from seasonal influenza because it affects children and young adults more frequently than the elderly. People with chronic health conditions and weakened immune systems are at high risk for complications from the H1N1 virus.

Flu Symptoms

Symptoms of H1N1 virus are the same as symptoms of seasonal influenza and may include:

- Fever
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Cough
- Body aches
- Sore throat
- May cause diarrhea or vomiting in young children

How is the Flu Spread?

Influenza spreads person-to-person via the respiratory route. Coughs and sneezes release the germs into the air where they can be directly breathed in by others. Germs can also rest on hard surfaces like counters and doorknobs, where they can survive for up to 48 hours and be picked up on hands.

General infection control practices, such as washing hands, coughing or sneezing into your arm, and staying home when ill, can help to reduce the spread of most viruses, including flu.

How does the H1N1 vaccine work?

The H1N1 vaccine is a flu shot made specifically to protect against the H1N1 flu virus. It is made exactly like the seasonal flu shot that is produced each year, except for the addition of a “helper substance” called an “adjuvant”. The “adjuvant” is added to the vaccine to help the body make better protection against H1N1 flu virus (also called an immune response). Based on early studies, the H1N1 vaccine is expected to be very effective in preventing H1N1 flu virus.

The H1N1 vaccine will **not** protect against seasonal influenza infection. So, this year you will need both the H1N1 and seasonal flu shots to get as much influenza protection as possible.

Who should get the H1N1 Vaccine?

The H1N1 vaccine is recommended for anyone six months of age and older who needs or wants protection against H1N1 flu virus. Certain people, who are most at risk for complications from the H1N1 flu virus will be offered the H1N1 vaccine first. For women in early stages of pregnancy (less than 20 weeks), there is another H1N1 vaccine that is available which does not contain the adjuvant.

Children under the age of ten will require two half doses of the H1N1 vaccine at least 21 days apart.

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The H1N1 vaccine will be provided to people who will benefit most from the vaccine first, followed by anyone else who would like the vaccine. People in the first group include:

- People with chronic medical conditions under the age of 65
- Pregnant women over 20 weeks, or with underlying medical conditions, or women who have recently had a baby
- Children six months to under five years of age
- People living in remote and isolated settings or communities
- Health care workers involved in pandemic response or who deliver essential health services
- Household contacts and caregivers of infants under six months of age, or people who are immunocompromised.

The second group receiving H1N1 vaccine includes:

- Children 5 to 18 years of age
- First responders (e.g. Police and firefighters)
- Poultry and swine workers
- Adults 19 to 64 years of age
- Adults 65 years of age or over

Who should not get the H1N1 Vaccine?

- Infants under 6 months of age
- Anyone who has had a severe reaction to a previous dose of flu vaccine
- Those with a life-threatening allergy to eggs or egg protein
- Anyone with a severe allergy to a component of the vaccine
- Those who developed Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 8 weeks of a past flu shot
- Anyone sick with a fever should wait until they recover before getting the vaccine
- Anyone who developed oculorespiratory syndrome and was hospitalized following receipt of flu vaccine.

What are the risks from the H1N1 Flu Shot?

The H1N1 vaccine is made exactly like the seasonal influenza vaccine that is produced each year, except for the addition of the helper “adjuvant”. The seasonal influenza vaccine is very safe and serious side effects are very rare, and the H1N1 vaccine is expected to be just as safe. The adjuvant has been thoroughly studied in about 40,000 people and it has not been shown to cause any serious side effects.

Because the influenza vaccine does not contain live virus, you cannot get flu from the vaccine. Minor side effects from the H1N1 vaccine are expected and may include: pain and swelling where the injection is given, tiredness, muscle and joint pain, and headaches. Children may have a mild fever, be tired and irritable and not want to eat. As with the seasonal influenza vaccine, it is expected that most side effects will be mild, will not last long, and will go away on their own.

When should I seek medical attention?

Call your doctor or go to the nearest hospital if you have any of these symptoms after you receive the vaccine: high fever, skin rash, itchiness, hives, swelling of the lips, tongue or face, difficulty breathing, severe dizziness, fits or convulsions, and/or other serious reactions to the vaccine. Advise your healthcare provider that you had an H1N1 flu shot.

For more information, call Health Line at 519-271-7600 ext 267. Listowel area residents call 1-877-271-7348 ext 267. Or visit www.pdhu.on.ca

