

Protection from Pandemic H1N1 2009 Influenza

What is Pandemic H1N1 Influenza?

The pandemic H1N1 influenza is caused by a new strain of influenza virus. It is different than the seasonal flu in that most people have little or no immunity to the pandemic H1N1 influenza. The pandemic H1N1 influenza, also known as human swine influenza – is a respiratory illness with symptoms that are similar to those of regular seasonal influenza. While pandemic influenza has been mild in most cases it has been severe in some people and has resulted in a number of deaths. The pandemic H1N1 influenza is affecting more young and healthy people than the regular seasonal flu. Other groups of people such as pregnant women, persons living in remote communities and those with underlying medical conditions are at a greater risk for severe outcomes if they catch the pandemic H1N1 flu.

How is it spread?

Like other flu virus, the H1N1 spreads from person to person through coughing and sometimes through touching objects such as counters and doorknobs contaminated with the virus.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms begin quickly and include fever and cough and one or more of the following: fatigue, muscle aches, sore throat, headache, decreased appetite, runny nose. Others have also experienced nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. If you get flu-like symptoms and are pregnant or/and have underlying health problems and your symptoms or chronic condition worsens then you should contact your health care provider.

How can I prevent pandemic H1N1 influenza?

- Clean by washing your hands often and keeping common surfaces clean.
- Cover your coughs and sneeze into your arm, instead of your hands.
- Contain the illness by staying home if you are sick until your symptoms are gone and you feel well enough to participate in all activities.
- Choose to be immunized with pandemic H1N1 vaccine.

What are the benefits to receiving the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine?

Vaccine is the best way to prevent pandemic H1N1 influenza. This year, there are vaccines for both types of flu – one for the regular seasonal influenza, and one for the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus. Today you are receiving the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine.

What you should know about the pandemic H1N1 vaccine?

- It is similar to the seasonal influenza vaccine and is made the same way.
- The vaccine is made of killed H1N1 influenza virus and cannot give you H1N1 influenza.
- The vaccine contains an adjuvant (additive) that makes the vaccine work better. Adjuvants are used in other vaccines.
- Pregnant women will be offered an unadjuvanted vaccine and can be given at any stage of the pregnancy. If the pandemic influenza activity is high and the unadjuvanted product is not available women who are more than 20 weeks pregnant should and can receive the adjuvant product.
- This vaccine is provided free of charge to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians six months of age and older. Visitors to this province may also receive the vaccine free of charge.

Who should receive the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine?

Although all Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans should receive the vaccine, those most at risk will be offered the vaccine first.

These groups include:

- Everyone at high risk of H1N1 influenza complications:
 - Persons younger than 65 with chronic health conditions
 - Pregnant women
 - Healthy children six months to 5 years of age
 - Persons living in remote and isolated settings or communities
- Health-care workers involved in pandemic response or the delivery of essential health-care services
- Household contacts and care providers of person at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines
- Other groups identified as high risk

Who should not get the vaccine?

You should not receive the pandemic influenza vaccine if you:

- Had a severe allergic reaction to the seasonal influenza vaccine
- Have a severe allergy to eggs or any of the ingredients of the vaccine or its container
- Had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 8 weeks of a previous influenza vaccine
- Are younger than 6 months of age

People with serious acute illness should not receive the vaccine until their symptoms have cleared.

What are the risks to receiving the H1N1 influenza vaccine?

The most common side effects are a sore arm, redness and/or pain where the vaccine is given. This may last up to two days. Other symptoms such as tiredness, headaches, muscle aches may occur and can start within a few hours after the vaccination. Some people also get a fever for a day or two.

As it is with other vaccines there is an extremely rare chance that a severe life-threatening allergic reaction could occur. If it does happen, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.

Persons are asked to remain on site for at least 15 minutes after the vaccine is given so that possible reactions can be monitored.

Please report to your community health/public health nurse if you or your child has a severe or unusual reaction during the first four weeks after the vaccine or call HealthLine at 1 888-709-H1N1 (4161).

