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# H1N1 Vaccine

## *Everything you need to know*

Novel H1N1 (commonly referred to as swine flu) appeared throughout the world in April 2009, and some experts fear that the number of people infected could increase significantly. Scientists have worked to develop a vaccine that should be available by early fall of 2009.

### How is it spread?

Novel H1N1 is spread in the same way as seasonal flu, from person to person, generally through coughing or sneezing. A person can also become infected by touching a surface with flu viruses on it and then touching his/her nose or mouth.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting. Though the illness has ranged from mild to severe, most infected people have recovered without medical treatment. However, some hospitalizations and deaths have occurred.

Watch for these warning signs that require emergency medical care:

- *Children:* fast breathing; bluish or gray skin color; severe or persistent vomiting; not waking up or interacting; severe irritability; flu-like

symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

- *Adults:* difficulty breathing; pain or pressure in chest or abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting; flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough.

### Vaccination

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced that the first H1N1 vaccines should be approved and ready for use by fall 2009. The WHO has assured the public that the vaccine is completely safe, despite the quicker than usual timeline of development and approval.

Though testing is not complete, scientists believe that the vaccine will be most effective if given in two separate shots, about three weeks apart. This would be in addition to the normal seasonal flu shot, meaning that people would need three separate shots to protect against both seasonal and novel H1N1 flu.

### Vaccine Availability

It is likely that there will be limited quantities of the H1N1 vaccine, at least initially. Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends these priority groups for receiving the vaccination first:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than six months old
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- Persons between six months and 24 years old
- Persons ages 25-64 who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 due to chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems



## Did you know...?

People above the age of 65 seem to have some immunity to the novel H1N1 flu virus, with current studies indicating that the risk of infection among persons age 65 and older is less than the risk for younger age groups.