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H1N1 Vaccine

Everything you need to know

Novel H1N1 (commonly referred to as swine flu) is still a threat this flu season, but scientists have worked hard to develop a vaccine. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently approved this vaccine and government officials expect it to become available by mid-October.

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 H1N1 flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, chills, fatigue, diarrhea and vomiting. Though most infected people have recovered without medical treatment, 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.
- **Adults:** difficulty breathing; pain or pressure in chest or abdomen; sudden dizziness; confusion; severe or persistent vomiting; flu-like symptoms improve but then return.

Vaccination

The H1N1 vaccine was approved by the FDA, and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen

Sebelius announced that she expects the vaccine to become available mid-October (with very limited supplies available earlier that month).

Though experts had previously predicted the necessity for two H1N1 vaccination shots, clinical trials are now showing that the vaccine protects with only one dose (and protection kicks in eight to 10 days after the shot). However, this is in addition to the normal seasonal flu shot, so people will need to get two separate shots to protect against both seasonal and novel H1N1 flu.

Vaccine Availability

It is projected that there will be limited quantities of the vaccine initially (though officials expect that eventually there will be enough vaccine available for everyone who wants it). 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

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.