

Fact Sheet

FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

Seasonal Influenza Vaccine

You are receiving a **seasonal, yearly influenza (flu) vaccine**. You are **NOT** getting a vaccine at this time to protect against the novel H1N1 influenza (also called the swine flu or pandemic flu). This fact sheet answers common questions about both vaccines.

Why get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines protect against infection with flu viruses, which can cause fever, cough, muscle aches, chills, and fatigue (tiredness). The flu can also cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, or sore throat in some people.

With the flu, most people are sick enough that they don't feel like getting out of bed for several days to as long as a week. Some people become so ill they need to go to the hospital, and unfortunately people still die from the flu.

Some anti-viral medications do not work well to treat seasonal flu — it's better to protect yourself from catching the flu in the first place. **The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three types of flu virus (two A-types and one B-type) that are common in our community during the flu season. This means that with a single vaccine, you have protection against three viruses.**

Who should get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Anyone who wants to be protected against seasonal flu should get the vaccine. It's especially important for people who are at high risk of complications from seasonal flu, including:

- Pregnant women
- Infants and children (age 6 months to 19 years)
- Healthcare workers
- People 50 years of age and older
- People with chronic health conditions



The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the seasonal, yearly flu virus.

Do I also need a novel H1N1 vaccine if I've had a seasonal flu vaccine?

Novel H1N1 is a new flu virus strain that began to circulate in the spring of 2009. This year's seasonal flu vaccine doesn't protect against novel H1N1, which causes symptoms and complications similar to those of regular seasonal flu. To protect against all the most common flu strains in the community, both vaccines are needed.

Who should get the novel H1N1 flu vaccine?

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) has recommended that these people should get the H1N1 vaccine first when it is ready:

- Pregnant women
- Infants and children (age 6 months to 24 years)
- Healthcare workers
- People with chronic health conditions under age 65 years
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 6 months

Unlike for the seasonal flu, people over 50 have a lower risk of catching H1N1 flu than the groups listed above. This is why the CDC has not recommended they get the novel H1N1 vaccine first.

Other questions about flu vaccines

When will the vaccine for novel H1N1 be ready?

- **We don't know exactly when** it will be available or how much vaccine will be available for our state. When the novel H1N1 flu vaccine is available, **your local health department will inform you** about **who** should get the vaccine, **when** and **where** to get it, and **how many doses** are needed.

Should I wait until the novel H1N1 vaccine is available, and get both vaccines then?

- **No.** It is best to get the seasonal vaccine early, when supplies are available. Also, the seasonal flu vaccine and novel H1N1 flu vaccine will probably be distributed at different places.

I got a seasonal flu shot last year. Do I need it again this year?

- **Yes.** The flu virus types in the vaccine have changed, and you need to get this year's flu vaccine to be better protected against the current viruses in the community.

Why are seasonal flu shots being given earlier this year, and how long will their protection last?

- **Supplies are available earlier this year, and it's a good idea to get protected as soon as you can.** The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) reports that vaccines should provide immunity through the whole flu season. If you become ill with the novel H1N1 flu in the fall, it will help us choose the right treatment if you've already been vaccinated against the seasonal flu.

More ways to protect yourself and others against the flu

Along with getting a vaccine, you can protect yourself and others by:

- Washing your hands frequently
- Coughing into your elbow — covering your cough with your arm and not your hands
- Not shaking hands
- Staying home when you're sick

More ways to learn about the flu

Resources from the CDC:

- Key facts about seasonal flu — www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm
- Fact sheet on flu prevention — www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm
- Common flu symptoms — www.cdc.gov/flu/symptoms.htm
- Caring for yourself if you get the flu — www.cdc.gov/flu/takingcare.htm

Resources from the Utah Department of Health:

- Groups at greater risk for the flu — health.utah.gov/epi/diseases/flu/Influenza_High_Risk_Groups.pdf
- Utah flu vaccine locator — www.immunize-utah.org/apps/flu/index.php
- Novel H1N1 flu in Utah — health.utah.gov/epi/h1n1flu/



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