

# H1N1 Update

## November 19, 2009

### **What are the high-risk groups?**

Certain groups of people are at increased risk of developing serious complications or of dying from H1N1 influenza. Therefore, the CDC is encouraging them to receive the H1N1 vaccine as early as possible. These groups include: pregnant women, household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 6 months\*, health care workers and emergency response personnel with direct patient contact, people between the age of 6 months and 24 years, and adults 25-64 with medical conditions that are complicated by the influenza virus. (\*The vaccine has not been approved for use in children this young, so it is important that their caregivers receive the vaccine to avoid infecting them.)

### **Will there be prioritization of these groups?**

Yes, even among these groups at higher risk. In the beginning of the vaccine distribution process there won't be enough for everyone all at once. The groups at most risk of serious complications or death are encouraged to get the vaccine first, including pregnant women, children 6 months to 5 years of age with chronic medical conditions, and health care workers and first responders with direct patient contact. These people will be followed by children 5 to 18 years of age with medical conditions that are complicated by flu, household contacts of children younger than 6 months of age especially siblings, young adults 19 to 24 years of age with medical conditions, all healthy children and young adults age 6 months to 18 years of age, adults 25 to 64 years of age with conditions that are complicated by the flu, and all healthcare workers and first responders. After that the general public will be encouraged to get the vaccine.

### **What can I do to protect myself from getting sick?**

When the vaccine becomes available to protect against novel H1N1 flu, get vaccinated.

**There are also a number of daily actions you can take to help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses such as influenza:**

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer, especially every time after you cough or sneeze and before you eat or touch you face.
  - Try to avoid close contact with sick people
  - Avoid sharing eating utensils.
  - If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Call your healthcare provider if your symptoms are severe.

## **How long should I stay home if I do become sick with the flu?**

No matter what flu you have (novel H1N1 or seasonal flu), you should stay home from work, school, or other activities from the onset of symptoms until at least 24 hours after fever is gone (without the need for medications -acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and others). Although people may shed novel H1N1 flu virus for longer, the peak shedding is during the time of fever. Therefore, as long as people continue to be careful about hand hygiene and cough etiquette, they may return to their activities 24 hours after fever is gone.

**The incubation period** for H1N1 influenza virus infection is 1 to 7 days

**Infectious period** for H1N1 is defined as 1 day prior to the case's illness onset to 24 hours after fever resolution, without the use of antipyretics. Viral shedding may continue at lower levels after fever has resolved (especially in children).

**Testing** –Because the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is aware of widespread cases through out the state. The only groups being tested for H1N1 include:

- a. Hospitalized patients with influenza-like symptoms (ILS)
- b. Healthcare workers symptomatic with ILI
- c. Members of a possible outbreak or cluster, as recommended by NH DHHS

**Antiviral Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis** The principle of antiviral treatment in the setting of H1N1 is to use it for suspected or confirmed cases with ILI who are at high risk of complications and **within 48 hours** of symptom onset. This will help minimize unnecessary antiviral use and help prevent emergence of resistance.

The **NH DHHS guidelines differ from the CDC guidelines** in a few different places. For the sake of clarity, [NH recommendations](#) are listed here:

### **New Hampshire H1N1 vaccine prioritization groups:**

**As of today, the Division of Public Health Services extends the H1N1 Vaccine Distribution Priority Groups to include individuals in Phase 1 and Phase II**

- 1) Pregnant women**
- 2) All children from 6 months – 4 years old.**
- 3) Persons caring for or living with infants less than 6 months old (Including partners of pregnant women).**
- 4) Ages 5 through 24 with underlying medical conditions.**
- 5) Healthcare workers and EMS with direct patient contact.**

### **Who Should Not Be Vaccinated**

There are some people who should not get any flu vaccine without first consulting a physician. These people include

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.

- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine
- Children younger than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group).
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated).

**For more H1N1 information:**

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/notes/en/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1Flu/>

[http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/DHHS\\_SITE/swineflu.htm](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/DHHS_SITE/swineflu.htm)