

FLU VACCINES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Updated December 2, 2009

Is there more than one type of flu vaccine available this year?

Yes. A seasonal flu vaccine and an H1N1 swine flu vaccine are available this year. It is important for everyone to be vaccinated with both in order to be protected from all types of flu this fall and winter. Both types of vaccine can be given as a shot or a nose spray.

Who should get the nose spray version of the flu vaccines?

Both seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 swine flu vaccine are available as a nose spray. The nose spray is safe and effective. It is an especially good choice for:

- Healthy people between the ages of 2 to 49 years old
- People with a fear of needles
- Health care workers who are healthy and are less than 50 years old

Will the H1N1 swine flu vaccine protect me from seasonal flu?

No. There are two different flu vaccines this year. To be protected from both types of flu you must receive both types of vaccine.

Can I get the H1N1 swine flu shot and the seasonal flu shot at the same time?

Yes. The seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine can be given together if at least one vaccine is given as a shot. The nose spray preparations need to be given at least 14 days apart and preferably 28 days apart.

Who can get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Everyone should get the seasonal flu vaccine. Certain people are more likely to get very sick with the flu. Other people are more likely to spread the flu to people who could get very sick. Both of these groups should make sure to get vaccinated.

These people are:

- All persons 50 years old and over
 - Persons under 50 years old with chronic health care conditions
 - People who live in nursing homes or long-term care facilities
 - All children aged 6 months old through 18 years old
 - Pregnant women
 - Health care personnel
 - Persons who live with or care for children under 5 years old, especially children under 6 months of age (e.g., parents, siblings, and childcare providers)
- (Note: Children under 6 months of age are too young to get vaccinated for flu)

Who can get the H1N1 swine flu vaccine?

Everyone should get the H1N1 swine flu vaccine. Priority groups for the H1N1 swine flu should be vaccinated before others. These people are:

- Pregnant women
- Persons aged 6 months to 24 years

- Persons who live with or care for infants under 6 months of age (e.g. parents, siblings, and childcare providers)
- Health-care and emergency personnel who provide direct patient care or who have contact with infectious material
- Persons between the ages of 25-64 years who have chronic medical conditions

Can the nasal spray flu vaccine give you the flu?

No. The nasal spray contains a weakened form of the virus. It will not cause you to have the flu. The nasal spray is also known as Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine (LAIV) or Flu Mist.

Are the seasonal flu and H1N1 swine flu vaccine safe?

Yes. The seasonal flu vaccine has been used for over 30 years and proven to be safe and effective. The H1N1 swine flu vaccine is made exactly the same way as the seasonal vaccine. The H1N1 vaccine has the same safety profile as the seasonal flu vaccine. Both vaccines are put through the same safety testing before being released.

Will there be thimerosal in the vaccine?

Yes and No. Some of the shot versions of the vaccine contain small amounts of thimerosal. Thimerosal is a preservative used to prevent germ contamination of the vaccine in bottles which hold more than one dose of vaccine. If you are concerned, the nasal spray version of the vaccine has no thimerosal. The California law limiting who can be given H1N1 vaccine containing thimerosal has been set aside until September 2010.

Should I be worried about Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS)?

GBS is very rare. The exact cause for it is unknown. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have many monitoring systems in place for vaccine safety. There have not been increased reports of GBS to date.

Do the seasonal or H1N1 vaccines contain adjuvants?

No.

Have there been any serious side effects to seasonal or H1N1 vaccine?

No. Serious side effects are very rare with both vaccines.

Is the H1N1 swine flu vaccine expensive?

No. Cost varies depending on where you get vaccinated. It is less expensive than seasonal flu because the federal government is covering the cost of the vaccine.

When and where can I get vaccinated for H1N1 swine flu?

The best place to be vaccinated is in your doctor's office. Call to see if your doctor has vaccine. Check the SFPDPH website (www.sfcddcp.org) or call 311 for more information.

This fact sheet will be updated as the situation changes and additional information is available.

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