New Hampshire
Department of
Health and Human Services

# Fact Sheet

10/8/09

# H1N1 Vaccine

## About H1N1

- H1N1 is a new influenza virus strain recognized in April in the United States and Mexico.
- It has since spread around the world and been declared the first pandemic of the 21st century by the World Health Organization.
- H1N1 is a virus that causes a contagious acute respiratory disease.
- Symptoms of include a fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose and body aches. Some people have also reported diarrhea and body aches.
- Illness caused by the new H1N1 virus is generally mild though some people have developed severe disease requiring hospitalization. In the United States, 36,000 people die every year from complications of influenza. Mortality rates for the new H1N1 flu are similar to prior years. However, H1N1 is different from most years in that populations that are not usually affected by seasonal flu are more likely to become ill, such as pregnant women and young people.

## Prevention of H1N1

- H1N1 is spread primarily through coughing and sneezing. Therefore, the best ways to help prevent becoming ill are to wash your hands frequently with soap and water, cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve, and wash commonly touched surfaces such as door knobs and faucets.
- It is also important to stay home from work or school while you are sick and until you have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine. This helps prevent you from spreading your germs to others.
- The best way to prevent influenza is with a vaccine. This year both seasonal and H1N1 vaccines will be available. H1N1 vaccine distribution has already begun.

## About the Vaccine

- Certain high-risk groups have been identified to receive the vaccine and they will be prioritized in order of risk because the vaccine is going to be coming into New Hampshire in small batches at first.
- The high-risk groups identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and encouraged to receive the vaccine include:

pregnant women, healthcare workers with direct patient contact, emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months, people aged 6 months to 24 years, and people aged 25 to 64 with underlying health conditions, such as asthma and heart disease, that put them at risk for complications.

- The vaccine comes in two different forms: a nasal spray that contains live weakened virus and an injection that contains killed virus. Neither vaccine can cause influenza. The nasal spray is recommended for healthy people aged 2 to 49 who are not pregnant.
- People who should not receive either version of the vaccine are people who: are allergic to chicken eggs, have had a severe reaction to influenza vaccination in the past, developed Guillain-Barré syndrome within 6 weeks of receiving and influenza vaccine, children younger than 6 months, or are ill and have a fever.
- This H1N1 vaccine does not protect against the seasonal strains of flu. A separate vaccine is needed to protect against seasonal flu.
- People age 10 and older will only require one dose of the vaccine, but those younger than 10 will require two. The doses should be separated by 4 weeks.

**Where to Get the Vaccine**

- Early in the H1N1 vaccination campaign, most vaccine will be dispensed at physician offices, though this will change as the season progresses. At risk populations will be vaccinated first and later public vaccination clinics and retail outlets will offer the vaccine. Contact your healthcare provider. Major announcements will be made through the news media.

**For more information about the H1N1 vaccine, visit www.dhhs.nh.gov, www.cdc.gov, or www.flu.gov or call the NH Department of Health and Human Services Division of Public Health Services at 603-271-4496.**