

How do I protect myself from H1N1?

The single most important action to protect against getting H1N1 infection is to get vaccinated. (This will be especially important for those at higher risk for H1N1 complications such as pregnant women, children less than 5 years, and people with chronic medical conditions like asthma, heart disease, or diabetes.) Limited doses of the H1N1 vaccine will become available in late October. There are five (5) basic preventive measures to follow:

- Obtain the H1N1 vaccine when it is available.
- Wash your hands often or use hand sanitizers, if soap and water is unavailable.
- Stay away from those who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Routinely clean commonly touched surfaces.

When should I stay home?

If you are sick, you should stay home and avoid contact with others. It is important to know the symptoms of H1N1 influenza, which are similar to the seasonal flu. This includes fever of >100 degrees F, coughing, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Diarrhea and vomiting may also occur. The CDC guidance as of October 2009, is to:

- Stay home for 24 hours after fever is gone, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- If you have underlying medical conditions that place you at risk for complications from the flu, please contact your doctor and describe your symptoms. He/she will determine if you need to be seen and need antiviral medication.
- If you have no underlying medical conditions, but your symptoms become severe (i.e., very high fever of 103 degrees F or higher, trouble breathing, pain in chest), you will need to be seen in the emergency department.
- Persons with no underlying medical conditions and no severe symptoms should not need medical care and should stay home. You should return to work as per the guidance above.

If your symptoms improve and then get worse again, you should contact your doctor or seek medical care. The recommendation for health professionals is still 7 days or until symptoms have gone away, whichever is longer.

Can I get a vaccine for H1N1?

This flu season, you will need to be vaccinated for two different types of flu: one shot will be given for regular seasonal flu and an additional shot will be necessary to protect against H1N1 flu. One dose of H1N1 flu vaccine is recommended for persons 10 years of age and older, while two doses are still recommended for children 6 months to 9 years

old. Individuals at higher risk for complications (i.e., pregnant women, children and young adults 6 months to 24 years old, adults 25 to 64 years old with chronic medical conditions), those who routinely care for those at higher risk (i.e., emergency medical service and health care workers), and household contacts and caretakers of infants younger than 6 months old should receive the vaccine first.

Who should be tested?

Because the H1N1 virus is widespread in San Diego County, routine H1N1 testing for the general public is not recommended. Testing is prioritized for hospitalized patients, fatal cases, and patients seen at locations that routinely monitor influenza for the County. Other special situations such as outbreaks in schools, correctional institutions, or facilities where large number of people live or spend time may also require limited testing.

Who should be treated with anti-viral medication?

- Hospitalized patients with influenza-like illness
- Persons who present with more severe influenza
- Persons at higher risk of developing complications of influenza
 - pre-existing medical conditions
 - less than 2 years old or over 65 years old
 - pregnant

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe?

Yes. The same manufacturers who produce seasonal flu vaccines are producing 2009 H1N1 vaccines for use in the United States and the vaccines are being made in the same way that the seasonal vaccines are made. The same side effects typically associated with the seasonal flu shot and the seasonal nasal spray vaccine are expected with the 2009 H1N1 flu shot and 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine. Mild side effects may be experienced which include soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, fainting (mainly adolescents), headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea. If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1-2 days. Life threatening allergic reactions are very rare and require immediate ER care.

For more information: http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/vaccine_safety_qa.htm

Are there alternative vaccines?

There are two forms of each vaccine for this flu season. The injectable or intranasal mist for both seasonal influenza and H1N1. Each individual should complete a brief questionnaire which helps determine which form you should receive.

For detailed information, please read:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/general.htm>

If I received the seasonal influenza vaccine, do I need to get the H1N1 influenza vaccine?

Yes. They are different vaccines and provide protection against different viruses. You need to receive both vaccines to be protected against both seasonal and H1N1 influenza.