

Flu Vaccine is now available; please contact our office to schedule an appointment. Swine Flu Vaccine should be available the end of October. Both Flu & Swine Flu Vaccines are recommended.

H1N1 Flu Q&A

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of novel H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

How severe is illness associated with novel H1N1 flu virus?

Illness with the new H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have been sick have recovered without needing medical treatment, hospitalizations and deaths from infection with this virus have occurred. Disease in Collin County has been mild and no deaths have occurred thus far. About 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with this novel H1N1 virus have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at “high risk” of serious seasonal flu-related complications. This includes pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and novel H1N1 flu shed virus and may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems and in people infected with the new H1N1 virus.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 15-20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol based cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

When is it expected that the novel H1N1 vaccine will be available?

The novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available in the fall (mid-October). It is anticipated that providers will give 2 doses of the vaccine, 3-4 weeks apart. It is anticipated there will be a nasal preparation available. Further clarification is expected after information from the trial studies is released.

Will the seasonal flu vaccine also protect against the novel H1N1 flu?

The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel H1N1 flu.

Can the seasonal vaccine and the novel H1N1 vaccine be given at the same time?

It is anticipated that seasonal flu and novel H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day. However, we expect the seasonal vaccine to be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. The usual seasonal influenza viruses are still expected to cause illness this fall and winter. Individuals are encouraged to get their seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it is available.

Who will be recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine?

CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the novel H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These target groups include:

- pregnant women
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old
- people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

It is not expected that there will be a shortage of 2009 H1N1 vaccine, but availability and demand can be unpredictable. There is some possibility that initially the vaccine will be available in limited quantities. In this setting, the committee recommended that the following groups receive the vaccine before others: pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact, **children 6 months through 4 years of age, and children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions.**

The committee recognized the need to assess supply and demand issues at the local level. The committee further recommended that once the demand for vaccine for these target groups has been met at the local level, programs and providers should begin vaccinating everyone from ages 25 through 64 years. Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. Therefore, as vaccine supply and demand for vaccine among younger age groups is being met, programs and providers should offer vaccination to people over the age of 65.