

H1N1 Frequently Asked Questions

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

The Monroe County Health Department (MCHD) is offering free H1N1 vaccinations to everyone in the community who wishes to be protected from this illness.

Why should I receive the H1N1 vaccine? Isn't it too late?

Though H1N1 flu activity seems to have peaked locally, this may be temporary. H1N1 illness is still present in our community. If you are not vaccinated, you are at an increased risk since there may be another wave of infection. Vaccination ensures that the impact of the flu on the community will be minimized. Typically, flu season peaks in January and February so there still is time to protect yourself and your family.

How do I get the H1N1 Vaccine?

- Vaccination for H1N1 is now being provided on a walk-in basis in the Health Department Clinic. Clinic hours are Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:00 – 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Evening clinic hours are available until 6:00 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of every month. Please note there are no clinic hours on Thursdays.
- Contact your health care provider– such as your pediatrician or family practice doctor – to see if he or she is offering the H1N1 vaccine.
- Visit your local pharmacy – as with seasonal flu, some pharmacies are offering H1N1 vaccine to the public.

How much does it cost?

The H1N1 flu vaccine will be provided at NO COST at the Monroe County Health Department. Health care providers and pharmacies may charge an administration fee.

What are the types of vaccine available?

There are two types of H1N1 flu vaccine:

1. The injectable "flu shot" is given with a syringe, usually in the arm. The injectable vaccine is approved for use in anyone six months of age and older, including pregnant women, and people with chronic medical conditions.
2. Nasal-spray flu vaccine (FluMist[®]) is a weakened live virus vaccine that can be given to healthy people 2-49 years of age that are not pregnant.

A nurse can help you determine the best option. Availability of the two vaccine formulas may vary due to limited supplies.

What about seasonal flu? How is it different from H1N1?

Seasonal flu vaccine protects against three strains of seasonal influenza virus that may circulate this fall and winter. Seasonal flu is separate from the H1N1 influenza vaccine and is available through the MCHD, as well as some pharmacies and healthcare providers. Seasonal flu vaccine also comes in both injectable and nasal-spray forms. Ideally, everyone should have both seasonal and H1N1 vaccine to be fully protected.

Who can or cannot receive H1N1 vaccine?

All individuals who would like to be protected from this virus should receive the vaccine. Unless an individual has had a laboratory confirmed case of H1N1 influenza, H1N1 vaccination is recommended.

Additionally, people with severe egg allergies should not be vaccinated.

Is Monroe County residency required?

Although there is no residency requirement, our H1N1 vaccination campaign is intended for persons who live, work, or go to school in Monroe County. Each county is receiving the vaccine according to the size of its population. However, proof of residency is not required.

Can another caregiver bring my child for an H1N1 vaccination?

A parent or legal guardian must sign the consent form. Another responsible adult may then stay with the child or minor under 18 year of age during vaccination. The responsible adult should have permission to make medical decisions if the child has any reaction to the vaccination and if the child needs medical attention for any reason.

Is Preservative-Free H1N1 vaccine available?

Preservative-free, injectable H1N1 vaccine is available. Area health care providers have received small amounts of preservative-free H1N1 flu shots for their patients. Mostly, the flu shots available are from multidose vials and contain some preservative to prevent contamination.

The nasal spray (FluMist®) does not contain any preservative and is approved for healthy people 2 -49 years that are not pregnant.

When can my child get his or her second dose of the H1N1 vaccine?

Children 6 months through 9 years should have two doses of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine separated by 4 weeks (28 days). The child may receive his or her second dose at the Health Department or at the pediatricians, if the pediatrician has H1N1 vaccine available. If your health care provider is offering H1N1 vaccines, please continue to check with him or her regarding availability. Health care providers are continuing to receive H1N1 vaccine supplies weekly.

Can the H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Vaccines be given at the same time?

Yes, if at least one of the two vaccines is the injectable or shot formula, they may be given at the same time. If both vaccines are nasal spray (FluMist®), they must be separated by at least 4 weeks (28 days).

We understand that it can be confusing when children need two doses of each vaccine. To help explain, the two doses of *H1N1 vaccine* should be separated by 4 weeks, and the two doses of *seasonal vaccine* should be separated by 4 weeks. In most cases, the H1N1 vaccine and the seasonal vaccine can be given at the same time or near the same time. The exception is if both vaccines are nasal spray (FluMist). As long as one of the two vaccines (H1N1 and seasonal) is injectable (a shot), no waiting period between them is recommended.

Is the 2009 H1N1 Vaccine safe?

The H1N1 vaccine is produced in the same manner and by the same U.S. manufacturers as the seasonal flu vaccine. Seasonal flu vaccine has an excellent safety record; 100 million people receive it every year. Early clinical studies of the H1N1 vaccine have shown reactions similar to seasonal flu vaccine.

Who has been vaccinated already against H1N1?

Thousands have been vaccinated at the nine (9) H1N1 Vaccination Clinics sponsored by the Monroe County Health Department this past fall. These clinics were intended for the target populations most at risk of complications from the H1N1 flu. Additionally, smaller clinics were held locally for specialty groups (i.e. health care professionals, law enforcement and fire personnel, college students and others with special needs.) The vaccine now is available to everyone.

How can I stay healthy?

People can help slow the spread of H1N1 influenza by taking simple steps, including:

- If you are sick, stay home from work or school until you have been fever-free at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medications).
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or inner elbow.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. If access to soap and water isn't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

I still have questions. Whom can I contact?

For updates and more information on H1N1 influenza visit <http://www.co.monroe.mi.us/publichealthH1N1> or call the Flu Hotline at 734-240-7878.