

What is thimerosal and why is it used in the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines?

Thimerosal is a mercury-based preservative that has been used in medical products and vaccines for more than 60 years.

It is required in multi-dose vials to prevent contamination during repeated use.

Despite media speculation there is no scientific evidence anywhere in the world that thimerosal in vaccines has caused any developmental or neurological abnormalities, such as autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or any other health problem.

What is Guillain-Barré syndrome?

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare and sometimes severe condition affecting the body's nerves. What causes GBS is not clear, but it generally happens after infections such as stomach bugs, coughs and colds.

It is thought to be due to the immune system mistakenly attacking the body's own nerves. This results in muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. Most people recover completely but the consequences can be severe in some.

Can I get Guillain-Barré syndrome from the H1N1 vaccine and seasonal flu vaccines?

The chances of GBS affecting you after any flu vaccine (not just H1N1) are about one in a million. Studies also show that GBS is four to seven times more likely after an attack of the actual flu than after the influenza vaccine.

In the USA in 1976 a vaccine used against a different strain of swine influenza was associated with around 400-500 people developing GBS - or about one case per 100,000 people vaccinated.

Such a high occurrence of GBS after flu shots has not been witnessed since.

H1N1 & Seasonal Flu Vaccine Questions and Answers

Do I need to get both the H1N1 vaccine and the regular flu vaccine?

Yes, you need to get both seasonal and H1N1. Seasonal flu is different from H1N1, thus you need to be vaccinated against both flu types.

Which kind of vaccine, inhaled or injected, is best for me?

The nasal spray, known as FluMist, is not recommended for pregnant women or people with underlying conditions such as asthma, or individuals who are immunocompromised.

Where can I get more information about the H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines?

Useful websites include:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/>

Flu.gov: <http://www.flu.gov/>

World Health Organization (WHO): <http://www.who.int/en/>

New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH): <http://www.health.state.ny.us>

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH): <http://www.nyc.gov>

1199 members have questions?

Call the National Benefit Fund nurse helpline at (866) 935-1199

This is a summary of information available on the websites of the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It should not be treated as a substitute for medical advice.

H1N1 & Seasonal Flu Vaccine Questions and Answers



For more information please visit: www.labormanagementproject.org

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H1N1 & Seasonal Flu Vaccine Questions and Answers

What are the side effects of the H1N1 and Seasonal Flu vaccine?

Side effects for both the H1N1 vaccine and seasonal flu vaccine are considered mild. You might have a sore arm or a red mark. Sometimes people report a kind of mild, low-grade fever.

Is it true that you get the flu when you get the flu vaccine?

No. You might get some mild symptoms, but you don't get a full-blown case of flu.

Can I get both vaccines on the same day?

If you are receiving flu shots, yes, you can get one in one arm and one in the other.

The H1N1 vaccine is free because it's being provided by the federal government. If people go to their primary care physician, the office may charge an administrative fee, \$5 to \$15 or so.

Should I be worried about getting the H1N1 vaccine because it's new?

Clinical trials conducted by the National Institutes of Health and the vaccine manufacturers have shown that the new H1N1 vaccine is both safe and effective. The FDA has licensed it. There have been no safety shortcuts.

It is produced exactly the same way the seasonal flu vaccine is produced every year. It is simply a new virus strain. In fact, had H1N1 struck this country earlier than this spring, the H1N1 strain probably would have been included as part of this year's seasonal flu shot.

Millions of Americans get the seasonal flu vaccine each year without any problems. Still, understanding that some Americans have concerns about "new" vaccines, the National Institutes of Health and the vaccine manufacturers have conducted more rigorous tests on the H1N1 vaccine than they do on other flu vaccines, and there have been no red flags from these clinical trials.

Who is most at risk for developing the H1N1 flu?

Priority Groups Recommended to Receive the H1N1 Flu Vaccine

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel made up of medical and public health experts, recommends several groups receive the H1N1 flu vaccine as soon as possible:

Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated.

Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants less than 6 months old might help protect infants by "cocooning" them from the virus.

Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism among healthcare professionals could reduce healthcare system capacity.

All people from 6 months through 24 years of age

Children from 6 months through 18 years of age because there have been many cases of H1N1 flu in children and they are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread.

Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because there have been many cases of H1N1 flu in these healthy young adults and they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population.

Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

Who is most at risk for developing the seasonal flu?

Priority Groups Recommended to Receive the Seasonal Flu Vaccine

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a panel made up of medical and public health experts, recommends several groups receive the seasonal flu vaccine as soon as possible:

- ❖ Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday
- ❖ Pregnant women
- ❖ People 50 years of age and older
- ❖ People of any age with certain chronic conditions
- ❖ People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:

- ➔ Health care workers
- ➔ Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
- ➔ Household contacts and caregivers of children <5 years of age with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children <6 months of age (these children are at higher risk of flu-related complications)