

H1N1 Influenza Q & A

Q: If I had the flu in September 2009, do I have immunity against 2009 H1N1 influenza now?

A: Unless a person was confirmed as having 2009 H1N1 in September 2009, s/he could not be certain of having immunity now. As of September 17, Michigan had 39 laboratory-confirmed cases of seasonal influenza and 11 laboratory-confirmed cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza.

Q: Is it possible to get 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu at the same time?

A: Yes. That is a scenario that particularly worries public health officials. An individual who has both illnesses at the same time could serve as a "mixing vessel" for the virus. Under the right circumstances, this could create a new, novel strain of the influenza virus.

Q: Is the production of the seasonal vaccine slowed down because of the production of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine?

A: Yes. The same companies are manufacturing the seasonal and 2009 H1N1 vaccines. It stands to reason that equipment used to create one vaccine cannot simultaneously be used to create the other vaccine.

Q: If my spouse had 2009 H1N1, and we live together but I didn't get sick, would I have immunity to 2009 H1N1?

A: If you were exposed to a confirmed case of 2009 H1N1, and your body mounted an effective immune response, you would have immunity to the 2009 H1N1 virus.

Q: What is the children's dosage schedule for H1N1 and seasonal vaccines?

A: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the use of one dose of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine for persons 10 years of age and older. This is slightly different from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recommendations for seasonal influenza vaccination which states that children younger than 9 who are being vaccinated against influenza for the first time need to receive two doses. CDC recommends that the two doses of 2009 H1N1 vaccine be separated by 4 weeks. However, if the second dose is separated from the first dose by at least 21 days, the second dose can be considered valid. Infants younger than 6 months of age are too young to get the 2009 H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines.

Q: If I received the 1976 swine flu vaccine, would I have any immunity to this 2009 strain?

A: The 1976 swine flu virus and the 2009 H1N1 virus are different enough that it's unlikely a person vaccinated in 1976 will have full protection from the 2009 H1N1. People vaccinated in 1976 should still be given the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

Q: Do the FluMist and shot versions of the vaccine have the same effectiveness?

A: There are two kinds of 2009 H1N1 vaccines being produced:

A 2009 H1N1 "flu shot" — an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The indications for who can get the 2009 H1N1 flu shot are the same as for seasonal flu shots. The flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, people with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women. The same manufacturers who produce seasonal flu shots are producing 2009 H1N1 flu shots for use in the United States this season. The 2009 H1N1 flu shot is being made in the same way that the seasonal flu shot is made. In general, seasonal influenza vaccines can be expected to reduce laboratory-confirmed influenza by approximately 90% in healthy adults <65 years of age. Health officials expect the same effectiveness of the 2009 H1N1 flu shot.

The 2009 H1N1 nasal spray flu vaccine — a vaccine made with live, weakened viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "live attenuated influenza vaccine"). The indications for who can get the 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine are the same as for seasonal nasal spray vaccine. LAIV is approved for use in healthy* people 2 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant. The nasal spray vaccine for use in the United States is being made by MedImmune, the same company that makes the seasonal nasal spray vaccine called "FluMist®" The 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine is being made in the same way as the seasonal nasal spray vaccine. In one large study among children aged 15-85 months, the seasonal nasal-spray flu vaccine LAIV (FluMist®) reduced the chance of influenza illness by 92% compared with placebo. Health officials expect the same effectiveness of the 2009 H1N1 flu nasal spray.

About 2 weeks after vaccination, antibodies that provide protection against 2009 H1N1 influenza virus infection will develop in the body.

Q: How would I know the difference between the flu and a cold?

A: See the attached document.