

H1N1 FLU

Slow the spread!

Myths and Facts about Influenza Vaccine

General Information

The most effective way to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu, including H1N1, is to get immunized. Immunization against the flu is a safe, effective and healthy choice for all residents. The flu can make you very sick, and can even cause death for people with certain chronic health concerns. The flu shot is the best protection against this disease.

Getting a H1N1 shot and good hand washing are your best protection against the H1N1 flu.

Myths and Facts

MYTH: Vaccines don't work.

FACT: When there is an outbreak of a disease, some people who have been immunized do get sick. This leads to the idea that vaccines don't work. Because each individual is different, about 5 to 10 per cent of people vaccinated will not develop immunity to the disease. Nevertheless, immunization reduces the risk of severe disease. In the case of the H1N1 flu virus, since very few people are immune, it is predicted that without interventions like a vaccine and antivirals, close to 25 to 35 per cent of the population could become ill over the period of a few months. Immunization is the most effective way to prevent illness and to reduce the risk of transmitting the flu to those around you.

MYTH: The flu vaccine causes severe reactions or side effects.

FACT: We acknowledge that there are concerns with respect to immunization. Some side effects that may occur are redness, discomfort, and swelling at the injection site that may last up to two days and fever, fatigue and muscle aches that may last for up to two days. As is the case with any vaccine, there is an extremely small chance that a more serious reaction can occur.

Vaccines are among the safest tools of modern medicine. In Canada, serious side effects from the flu vaccine occur very rarely – about one for every million shots administered. The vast majority of side effects from vaccines are minor and temporary, like a sore arm or mild fever. These are much less severe than influenza infection, and last for a much shorter time. No long-term effects have been associated with any vaccine currently in use.

MYTH: Because the H1N1 vaccine is new, it is untested and unsafe.

FACT: Careful research into the safety the H1N1 vaccine was done prior to its widespread use. The requirements for vaccines approved for sale in Canada are stringent. Every vaccine lot is safety-tested by the manufacturer and by the Biologics and Genetic Therapies Directorate at Health Canada. Health Canada reviews all available test results, including international data, to ensure the vaccine is safe and effective before it is authorized for use in Canada. The dangers of vaccine-preventable diseases are much greater than the risk from a serious reaction to a vaccine.

The use of an adjuvanted vaccine is not new. An adjuvanted vaccine is a vaccine that includes a substance that boosts an individual's immune system and increases their response to a vaccine. The adjuvant in Canada's H1N1 vaccine is made up of natural ingredients such as water, oil and vitamin E. It has been widely used safely in Europe in other vaccines. Unadjuvanted vaccines are recommended for pregnant women because there is less safety data available on how pregnant women respond to adjuvanted vaccines. This does not mean unadjuvanted vaccines are safer than adjuvanted ones. Unadjuvanted vaccines just have fewer ingredients. The adjuvant in the H1N1 vaccine has already been evaluated by Health Canada, and no safety concerns have been found.

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MYTH: The flu vaccine gives people the flu.

FACT: The flu vaccine cannot give someone the flu. The flu vaccine contains dead flu viruses that cannot multiply or cause infection. People, who receive a flu shot may already be exposed to a virus, which may result in flu like symptoms.

MYTH: Getting a flu shot every year weakens your immune system.

FACT: The vaccine prepares and boosts your immune system to help you fight the virus if you contract it. People who get the flu shot each year are better protected against the flu than those who do not get vaccinated.

MYTH: You should not get the flu shot because you have a number of different allergies.

FACT: Most allergies are not a reason for not getting a flu shot. You should not get the H1N1 flu shot if you had a severe allergic reaction to the seasonal influenza vaccine, have a severe allergy to eggs or any of the ingredients of the vaccine, and are younger than six months of age. If you have any questions about getting the H1N1 flu shot, speak with your health care provider.

The adjuvant contains squalene, which comes from fish oil. This substance also occurs naturally in humans, and would not be expected to cause allergies.

MYTH: You are pregnant and should not have a flu shot.

FACT: The influenza vaccine is safe during pregnancy. Being immunized is the best way to protect yourself and those around you, including your unborn infant. It is also safe for babies to breastfeed after mothers receive the influenza vaccine.

Although women who are pregnant are not more likely to get the H1N1 flu virus, they are more likely to suffer complications if they do get infected. This is particularly true in the second and third trimester of the pregnancy.

If you have any questions about getting an influenza shot during your pregnancy, speak with your health care provider.

MYTH: My child got the flu shot last year so there is no need to give him the shot again. He / She is still protected against the virus.

It is important for children over the age of six months to be immunized every year to make sure their body forms antibodies against the most common strains of flu viruses circulating that year. Because the flu viruses may change from year to year, the vaccine is updated annually, so your child should get the flu shot every year.

For more information:

- Please call either **1.888.920.3026** (H1N1 Flu Information Line) or **1.888.255.1010** if you have flu related questions **BEFORE** visiting your health centre or emergency room.
- Contact your local health care provider.
- Visit the following websites:
 - o NWT Health and Social Services, www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca.
 - o Canadian Coalition for Immunization Awareness and Promotion, www.immunize.cpha.ca.
 - o Public Health Agency, www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php.

If you would like this information in another official language, contact us at 867-920-3367.

Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, téléphonez-nous au 867-920-3367.



Health Line

1-888-255-1010

TDD/TTY 1-888-255-8211

H1N1 Flu Hotline 1.888.920.3026