

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

3255 – 122ND Ave., Suite 200, Allegan, MI 49010

Office Administration

(269) 673-5411

Emergency Preparedness

(269) 686-4580

Personal Health

(269) 673-5413



Communicable Disease

(269) 686-4524

Environmental Health

(269) 673-5415

Health Education

(269) 686-4523

Novel H1N1 Vaccination Q/A

Allegan County Health Department maintains a [H1N1 webpage](http://www.allegancounty.org) to keep residents updated. It is located at <http://www.allegancounty.org>, click on the H1N1 icon to go to the webpage. In addition, The Michigan Department of Community Health's website, www.michigan.gov/flu, maintains comprehensive and current information about the Michigan influenza vaccine program. For general information on the 2009-nH1N1 go to <http://www.pandemicflu.gov>

As the 2009 – 2010 influenza season progresses, there has many questions regarding flu vaccine coming into our department. The following questions and answers are intended to answer any questions you may have about influenza vaccine.

What is the single best way to stay protected against the flu virus? The influenza vaccine is the single best way to prevent you from getting sick with the influenza virus. Moreover, covering your coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues to prevent the spread of the influenza virus (or coughing and sneezing in your elbow when a tissue is not available), frequently washing your hands (or using hand sanitizers when soap & water is not available), and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with contaminated hands will help keep you healthy.

How many flu vaccines do I need this year? You should receive two different vaccines this year:

1. The seasonal vaccine, which will help prevent you from getting the seasonal flu virus.
2. The 2009 novel influenza A H1N1 vaccine, which will protect you from contracting the 2009 novel influenza A H1N1 virus (commonly called the "swineflu").

The 2009-nH1N1 influenza virus is not the same as previous or current seasonal influenza viruses. Therefore, seasonal influenza vaccine does not provide protection against the 2009-n H1N1 influenza virus.

Where should I get the vaccines? Contact your health care provider (or a participating pharmacy) to receive the influenza vaccines or call the health department to listen to the recorded message (or view [the H1N1 webpage](http://www.allegancounty.org)) to find out the community clinics locations & dates/times.

Is the 2009 novel influenza A H1N1 vaccine safe? The 2009 novel influenza A H1N1 vaccine is manufactured and tested using the same processes used for the seasonal vaccine. Many millions of doses of seasonal vaccine have been distributed every year for many years, and seasonal vaccines have a well-established safety profile. Vaccine safety is always monitored as part of the federal vaccination program.

Can I get both vaccines at the same time? It depends. Both seasonal and 2009-nH1N1 vaccines are available as inactivated (as a shot in the arm) and attenuated live (as a nasal mist sprayed in the nose) formulations. The existing recommendations are that two inactivated vaccines can be administered at any time before, after, or at the same visit as each other. If a person is eligible and prefers the nasal mist or live attenuated formulation of seasonal and 2009-nH1N1 vaccine, these vaccines should be separated by a minimum of four weeks.

Can anyone get the live (as a nasal mist sprayed in the nose) type of vaccine? No. Only healthy persons between the ages of 2 and 49 years of age can receive the live attenuated vaccine.

When should I get the vaccines? Both vaccines are available now. The sooner you get your vaccines the sooner you will be protected from getting influenza. The 2009-nH1N1 vaccine has been prioritized to specific target populations. In the near future, there will be a sufficient supply of vaccine available and anyone wanting to receive the vaccine may do so.

I have heard that certain groups of people should receive the 2009 novel influenza A H1N1 vaccine first. Who are they and why? The 2009 novel influenza A H1N1 vaccine is quickly being produced and distributed to meet the needs of all people. However, certain people are more likely to suffer from the complications of influenza. Therefore, it is critical that these people receive the vaccine first.

The following groups of people are recommended to receive the 2009-nH1N1 vaccine as it first becomes available:

1. Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;
2. 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 younger than 6 months old might help protect infants by “cocooning” them from the virus;
3. 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 in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity;
4. All people from 6 months through 24 years of age
 - a. Children from 6 months through 18 years of age because cases of 2009-nH1N1 influenza have been seen in children who are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread;
 - b. Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because many cases of 2009-nH1N1 influenza have been seen in these healthy young adults and they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population.
5. Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

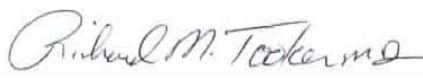
In closing, there are other effective ways to prevent the spread of this illness:

- Stay home when sick and do not have social contact until 24 hours without a fever.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Use your elbow to sneeze or cough into if a tissue is not available.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Do wash your hands especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective when soap and water is not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. The influenza virus spread that way.

Sincerely,



Rashmi Travis, M.P.H., C.H.E.S.
Health Officer
Allegan County Health Department



Richard M. Tooker, M.D., M.P.H.
Medical Director
Allegan County Health Department