

## Who Should Get the Novel H1N1 Influenza Vaccine?

The novel H1N1 influenza (flu) vaccine is expected to be available in mid-October. However, the delivery date will depend on the federal government's disbursement to the state, and then the state to local providers. Seasonal influenza vaccine is available now in our community, and it is highly recommended that all eligible age groups get immunized for optimal protection. The seasonal flu vaccine may be obtained through your own physician's office and at many clinics and pharmacies.

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has made recommendations on groups who should receive the vaccine once it is available.

These are the groups who are targeted to receive the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine:

- **Pregnant women** (higher risk of complications)
- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age** (younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated; therefore, those who care for them or are in constant contact should be vaccinated to prevent spreading potential illness to the baby)
- **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel** (these individuals are in constant contact with the public, people with weakened immune systems, patients and ill individuals and should be vaccinated to protect themselves and others)
- **All people from 6 months through 24 years of age**
  - **Children from 6 months through 18 years of age** (many cases of novel H1N1 flu are in children who are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of spreading disease)
  - **Young adults 19 through 24 years of age** (novel H1N1 flu has affected this group of healthy young adults who often live, work, and study in close proximity, and are frequently mobile)
- **Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza** (novel H1N1 influenza can result in severe illness, hospitalization or more severe consequences for high risk individuals).

It is not expected that there will be a shortage of vaccine. However, if a shortage occurs, the ACIP has further narrowed the priority groups who should receive the vaccine.

These are the groups who should be prioritized, if there is a shortage of vaccine:

- **Pregnant women**
- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age**
- **Health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact**
- **Children 6 months through 4 years of age**
- **Children 5 through 18 years who have chronic medical conditions**

Studies have indicated that persons aged 65 or older are at less risk than younger age groups of becoming infected with novel H1N1 flu. This age group should get vaccinated against the seasonal flu. Once the above groups have been vaccinated, then programs and providers should offer the vaccine to those 65 and older.