

# THE FLU

## Myths and Realities

**“The federal government is running a mandatory vaccination campaign.”**

The federal government’s vaccination program for H1N1 flu is VOLUNTARY. Some hospitals and localities may require health care workers to get vaccinated for the flu, but that is a local decision.

The petition on a few selected internet sites protesting the federal government’s “mandatory” vaccination campaign is simply false in its claims. Vaccination is highly recommended as a protective measure against the flu, but is absolutely voluntary.

**“It costs too much money to get an H1N1 vaccine.”**

The federal government has purchased the H1N1 vaccine and is providing it to states free of charge. This is different in many places from the seasonal flu vaccine.

Public vaccination clinics (sponsored by local health departments at schools or other places) will offer vaccine at no charge. Some private providers may charge a small fee to administer the vaccine, but cost should not be a barrier to getting immunized. Many, many people and businesses have stepped up to the public health challenge we all face and are working together for the overall public good to make this vaccine free – or at least affordable – for all those who want it.

**“You need to get two doses of the H1N1 vaccine, and it takes a month between each dose.”**

There is really good news that has come out of the clinical trials being run by the National Institutes of Health and the flu vaccine manufacturers. The H1N1 vaccine is a really good match with the H1N1 virus currently circulating across the country, and healthy adults and children 10 and older will need only one dose of vaccine.

Though scientists initially thought that two doses might be required, information from clinical trials has since demonstrated the H1N1 vaccine works faster than expected and works well against the H1N1 virus.

It’s also fine to get the seasonal flu shot and the H1N1 shot at the same time. If you get the nasal spray form of the vaccine, though, you will need to wait three or four weeks before getting another nasal spray vaccine.

**“This new vaccine is not safe and is untested.”**

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.

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Also, CDC has stepped up surveillance efforts to track the H1N1 vaccine and any possible adverse events. Since it is so closely related to the seasonal flu vaccine, we do not expect to see serious side effects. But we are taking all the necessary steps to promote and monitor safety.

The CDC's top doctors and scientists believe the risk of the flu, especially for pregnant women, children, and people with underlying health conditions, is higher than any risk that might come from the H1N1 vaccine.

**"I got an email that tells the story of someone who got a flu shot and had a miscarriage two days later."**

Tragically, every day in the U.S., people suffer from heart attacks, miscarriages, strokes, and other health-related events. Some result in serious illness, even death. For example, there are approximately 8,700 deaths from heart attacks, 140 cases of Guillain-Barre, and 14,000 miscarriages in the U.S. every week. These events are no more common among people who have received seasonal flu vaccine than in people who have not.

The CDC has received no reports of serious adverse events from people who have received the H1N1 vaccine to date in the clinical trials or in the few places across the country where vaccinations have begun. The CDC has created a strong new surveillance system that will allow them to track adverse reactions and quickly analyze whether there is a link to the vaccine.

**"You can get infected with H1N1 virus from eating pork."**

This is not true. The 2009-H1N1 virus is not spread by food. Eating properly handled and cooked pork products is safe.

**"A 14-year old girl in the United Kingdom died after being vaccinated with the HPV vaccine."**

British scientists report this particular event was unrelated to the HPV vaccine and definitely unrelated to the H1N1 flu vaccine. Public health officials in the UK have said the safety of the HPV vaccine was not in question, and no link can currently be made between the girl's death and the vaccine. According to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency—their counterpart to the FDA—the girl had a rare serious underlying medical condition that was likely to have caused her death.

Licensed seasonal flu vaccines have a long track record of safety based on use in hundreds of millions of people. H1N1 vaccines are being manufactured by the same methods as the seasonal flu vaccines administered every year.

**"You can get flu from drinking water or swimming pools."**

Chlorinated tap water and swimming pool water does not put you at risk for flu. To date, we don't know of anyone who has acquired flu from drinking water or from a swimming pool.