



# SENIOR CITIZENS

## H1N1 Risk

Many senior adults have wondered how they can protect themselves against the H1N1 influenza virus that has been spreading around the world. The good news is that evidence shows people age 65 and older are less at risk of getting sick with H1N1 than any other age group. In fact, some studies suggest seniors may even have some immunity to the H1N1 virus.

## H1N1 Vaccine

H1N1 vaccine should become available in mid- to late October 2009, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices says H1N1 vaccine should initially go to groups who have been most impacted by the virus so far. That includes:

- pregnant women,
- caregivers and household contacts of infants under 6 months old,
- health care and emergency services workers with direct patient care,
- children 6 months to 4 years old, and
- children 5 through 18 years old who are at higher risk for H1N1 because of chronic medical conditions.

## H1N1 Vaccine for Seniors

The federal government assures the public that it will continue to support the production of H1N1 vaccine until every US resident has had an opportunity to be vaccinated, but this could take months, or longer. Rest assured that as additional supplies of H1N1 vaccine become available, and the demand from the higher risk groups is met, senior adults will be offered a vaccination against H1N1 influenza. Also, be aware that you will likely need a second dose of H1N1 about one month after you receive the first dose.

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*For more information,  
contact your local public health department  
or visit [www.FightTheFluMO.com](http://www.FightTheFluMO.com)*

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## **H1N1 Vaccine and Seasonal Flu Vaccine**

The H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine. It is intended to be used alongside seasonal flu vaccine to help protect people.

While you are waiting for your chance to be vaccinated against H1N1 influenza, be sure to get your seasonal flu shot, as well as a pneumonia shot if you haven't yet had one.

The seasonal flu shot will not protect you against H1N1, but it will protect you against other flu viruses that are likely to circulate in our community. Seasonal flu affects about 5% – 20% of US residents each year. It sends 200,000 Americans to the hospital and kills 36,000 of them, so we must remain vigilant against it.

## **Protect Yourself Against Flu**

You can also protect yourself from flu viruses by practicing good handwashing, by keeping a distance of at least six feet from people who are sick, and by making healthy lifestyle choices. Get plenty of sleep, stay active, drink water, reduce stress, limit alcohol and tobacco use and stay connected to your support groups.

## **Protect Our Communities Against Flu**

You can help protect our communities as well, by staying home if you are sick. Cover your cough and sneeze and wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Try to limit your face-to-face interaction with others. Clean common surfaces where viruses may settle, such as telephones, light switches, door knobs and faucets. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever goes away, without the use of fever-reducing medication.

Your local public health department has additional information on how you can join in efforts to "Fight the Flu". Let's work together to protect ourselves, our families and our communities against all types of flu.

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