

Most Asked Questions about H1N1 Flu Updated 11-04-09

When can I get the H1N1 flu vaccine?

The Central District Health Department (CDHD) will open only one of its Ada County Points of Dispensing (PODs) facilities for Priority Groups this weekend, Saturday November 7th from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The Ada County POD this weekend will approximately 5300 doses available for distribution. **This vaccine is for Priority Groups only.**

Eventually everyone wanting the H1N1 flu vaccine will be able to get it, but that won't happen until CDHD is satisfied it has served a good percentage of those at highest risk of serious complications of flu infection. Keep checking our website and calling the Flu Hotline at 321-2222.

Who is included in the priority groups?

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- People between 6 months and 24 years
- People 25 through 64 years with chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

Where can I get the H1N1 flu shot?

Central District Health Department will operate only one Point of Dispensing (POD) Saturday November 7th **for Priority Groups.**

**The POD will be located in the former K-Mart store
1001 Park E. Center Blvd. (Click on the address for a map to the POD)**

Hours are from 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

No vaccine will be available at the former Comp USA store on Milwaukee St.

What about my kids, can they get the H1N1 flu vaccine?

Yes, children from six months of age and children and young adults up to 24 years of age are eligible for the H1N1 flu vaccine.

CDHD has temporarily suspended its in-school vaccination program because of vaccine delivery problems. Restarting the program will depend on additional deliveries of vaccine, especially the nasal spray form of the vaccine.

What about students in private and charter schools?

All children will eventually be served. Currently CDHD is adjusting its plans to include the vaccinations of children attending private and charter schools. Service to those schools may involve a private contractor providing the vaccine. All plans depend heavily on the delivery of additional vaccine.

Children attending private schools, charter schools and those schooled at home will still be able to go to the public POD for their vaccinations.

All students must have a consent form signed by a parent or guardian before being able to get a flu vaccination.

What will it cost to get the H1N1 flu vaccine?

All vaccine distributed by the public health department it will be free. Later, when the vaccine is made available in the community through private providers, you may be charged an administration fee.

What's the difference between the flu shot and the nasal spray?

Both the seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines are available in two forms:

- **The "flu shot"** – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle. The seasonal flu shot is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people and people with chronic medical conditions.
- **The nasal-spray flu vaccine** – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine"). LAIV is approved for use in healthy* people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant.

About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop that protect against influenza virus infection. Flu vaccines will not protect against flu-like illnesses caused by non-influenza viruses.

Where can I get a seasonal flu shot?

Seasonal flu vaccine is in short supply everywhere right now. CDHD does not provide adult flu vaccine and is currently without children's flu vaccine. We expect to get more children's vaccine by mid-to-late November. Many private providers are reporting the same situation. They have no vaccine, but expect it within a month. There is some information on other flu clinics on the CDHD website <http://cdhd.idaho.gov/IMM/flu/fluclinics.htm>

I've heard that some of the vaccine contains mercury, is this true?

Yes, some of the injectable (shot) form of the vaccine contains minute amounts of mercury in a preservative called thimerosal. Multi-dose vials of seasonal influenza vaccine contain thimerosal to prevent potential contamination after the vial is opened.

Some of the manufacturers will produce 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine in single-dose units, which will not require thimerosal as a preservative. In addition, the nasal spray version of the vaccine is produced in single-units and will not contain thimerosal.

One thing to keep in mind when considering whether or not to get the H1N1 vaccine is the relative risk of thimerosal-containing vaccine, versus the risk of getting an influenza infection. For one thing, there is far more mercury in a can of tuna than in a flu shot.

I'm pregnant and I know I should get the H1N1 flu vaccine, but is it safe?

The safety of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine is expected to be similar to seasonal influenza vaccine, which has been given to millions of pregnant women. 2009 H1N1 and seasonal influenza vaccines can be given to pregnant women **in any trimester** and can be given at the same time but in different injection sites.

Pregnant women should receive inactivated vaccine (flu shot) but should **NOT** receive the live attenuated vaccine (nasal spray).

Postpartum women, even if they are breastfeeding, can receive either inactivated vaccine or live attenuated vaccine (nasal spray).

Although there is no evidence that thimerosal (a mercury containing preservative added to multidose vials to prevent contamination) causes harm, in order to accommodate patient preferences, there will be vaccine available in single-dose preservative-free units.

CDC recommends that pregnant women receive influenza vaccine with or without thimerosal.