



STOP THE SPREAD

Info Line: 740-203-2015

Helpline – Dial 211

Clinic: 740-203-2040

Questions and Answers About H₁N₁ Flu

November 6, 2009

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 (referred to earlier as “swine flu” and then “Novel H1N1”) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int) (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of H1N1 flu was underway.

Do you have the H1N1 vaccine, and when can I get it?

The Delaware General Health District has received initial shipments of H1N1 vaccine. As additional supplies of vaccine are received, public clinics will continue to be scheduled. We recommend anyone wanting the vaccine to go to www.h1n1vaccine.odh.ohio.gov and pre-register. Then check our web site (www.delawarehealth.org) or call our prerecorded Information Line (740-203-2015) for clinic updates or call 211. Vaccine distributed to Delaware County is sent to the Health Department, Grady Memorial Hospital and other medical offices that are participating in the vaccination campaign. Vaccine provided by the Health Department is free and since it is being provided by the Federal Government, it cannot be restricted to local residents.

Who will have first priority for H1N1 vaccine? Each health department, hospital and medical provider may be offering vaccinations to only a portion of the priority group. As of this writing the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) priority list for H1N1 immunizations is:

- Health care and emergency services personnel (paramedics) with direct patient contact
- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Children 6 months through 24 years of age
- Persons 25-64 with chronic medical conditions (such as heart/lung disease, asthma, diabetes, or a weakened immune systems)

Clinics may further restrict vaccine within these priority groups.

Seniors age 65 and older and otherwise healthy adults are not in the priority groups because seniors are not as likely to get H1N1. Seniors may be able to receive the H1N1 vaccine when more is available and the priority groups have been provided the opportunity.

Can someone other than the child's parent bring them to the H1N1 flu clinic?

The parent or legal guardian **must** sign for the child receiving the H1N1 vaccine – either the shot or the FluMist. If the parent or legal guardian absolutely cannot attend the clinic with the child, the parent or legal guardian **must** first talk to one of the Delaware General Health District nurses **before** the day of the H1N1 clinic regarding the child's health history and type of vaccine to get and sign the consent form. Parents may call 740-203-2040 for more information.

What's the difference between the H1N1 mist vaccine and the H1N1 shot? Are the same people eligible for either one?

- Most flu vaccine is given in the form of a shot in the arm. The shot is made from parts of killed flu viruses. Side effects are rare and usually mild, such as redness or soreness or swelling around the area where the shot was given. You may also have a mild fever or mild aches.
- People who have allergies to eggs should not get the flu vaccine. Shots can be given to anyone over the age of 6 months. Children under the age of 10 who get the flu vaccine for the first time will need to get a second or “booster” dose four weeks after the first one.
- The flu mist vaccine is given by spraying a small amount of mist into the nose. The mist vaccine is made from weakened live flu virus. People who are healthy with no chronic illness can get the mist. The mist vaccine is used for people between the ages of 2 and 49 years.
- Pregnant women and some others who have chronic conditions should not get the flu mist.
- You cannot get the flu from having either kind of vaccine.

Can I get the FluMist for both the seasonal flu and H1N1? Only if the two doses of FluMist are separated by at least 28 days.

What are the chances that if I get the flu shot, that I will get some worse health problem because I got the shot?

- Some people who get the vaccine will have mild fever and aches. Some will have soreness, redness or swelling around the place where the shot was given. This will usually go away within a day or two. With the mist some will have a sore throat or stuffy/runny nose.
- Some people have allergic reactions to the vaccine. This is very rare. They may not know they are allergic till they get the shot. Signs of an allergic reaction are:
 - o Trouble breathing
 - o Wheezing or getting hoarse
 - o A fast heart rate
 - o Get hives
 - o Look pale
 - o Weakness or dizziness

Where can I go to get the seasonal vaccine and what does it cost?

Will I need anything else?

- The Delaware General Health District has exhausted its supply of seasonal flu vaccine in October. Demand for vaccine this year was far greater than past years.
- We do not have any more seasonal flu clinics scheduled at this time.
- You may visit the DGHD website at www.delawarehealth.org to check to see if additional seasonal flu vaccine has been received and is available for use.
- You can also check with your doctor, or go to a drug store or clinic in your area to see if they still have the seasonal flu vaccine.
- The cost will be different depending on where you go, which type you get and what kind of insurance you have. You should call ahead or check with the doctor, clinic or other location where you go to see what the details are there. It might range from free to about \$25.00 in most locations.

Where can I go to get the H1N1 vaccine and what does it cost? Will I need anything else?

- As H1N1 clinics are scheduled in Delaware County, they will be posted on the website at www.delawarehealth.org, on our information line at 740-203-2015 or by calling 211.
- You are asked to pre-register through that website
- If you have pre-registered on line – bring the printout with you – or at least bring the assigned identification number from the website with you to the clinic. Pre-registering does NOT guarantee you will receive the vaccine at the clinic you are attending. It helps the Delaware General Health District, the state and the Ohio Department of Health to track vaccine usage to better order vaccine and schedule clinics. You can also receive e-mail notification of H1N1 clinics in your area when they are scheduled.
- At the Delaware General Health District, the H1N1 vaccine will be provided for free. Other providers may charge an administration fee.

Can people who do not live in Delaware County come to a Delaware General Health District H1N1 clinic?

Because the H1N1 flu vaccine is provided by the Federal Government, anyone can attend any clinic if they meet the requirements for that clinic. This also means that Delaware County residents may go to any other H1N1 clinic if they meet their requirements.

Do I need both seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines?

The seasonal vaccine is not expected to protect against the H1N1 flu and the H1N1 flu vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine. Each protects against different viruses and is intended to be used in addition to the other.

How long do I need to wait between getting the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine?

- The inactivated H1N1 vaccine (shot) may be given at the same time as other vaccines, including the seasonal vaccine (shot).
- H1N1 live, attenuated vaccine (also called FluMist) and seasonal live, attenuated vaccine should be given at least 1 month apart.

- You may receive one Flu mist and one shot at the same time if both are available.
- The H1N1 mist may be given at the same time as most other vaccines, however, be sure to tell your doctor if you've had such a vaccine or plan to have one within the next month.

How does H1N1 virus spread?

Spread of H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Why cover your cough and sneezes?

Influenza is a respiratory disease most easily spread by breathing in droplets from coughs and sneezes. A cough or sneeze can send germs up to 6 feet away.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Many people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death have also occurred as a result of illness with this virus.

How can we protect ourselves from H1N1?

Health officials' advice is to use common-sense: Wash your hands frequently, cover your mouth and nose with your sleeve and elbow when you sneeze or cough, stay home if you're sick, and listen to your local health authorities for other recommendations. If you get sick, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them. This applies until your fever has been gone for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. You should also avoid travel and stay away from public places if you feel sick.

Why is hand-washing so important?

Hand washing works because the soap breaks up the dirt and removes germs. Hand washing is one of the easiest things we can do to stay healthy. We should all wash our hands after we use the restroom, before we eat, after touching objects that might be contaminated, and when they are noticeably soiled. Rubbing your hands together helps in the process and the running water washes away the dirt and germs. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or sanitizers should be used.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and H1N1 flu may be able to infect others from 1 day before getting sick to 5 to 7 days after the illness begins. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems. People should stay home while they are sick and at least 24 hours fever-free with no fever reducing medication.

If I have a family member at home who is sick with H1N1 flu, should I go to work?

Yes, if you are well but have an ill family member at home with H1N1 flu you can go to work as usual. You should monitor your health every day, and use common sense including washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze and covering those coughs

and sneezes. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective. If you become ill, you should follow your agency policy and stay home. Employees who have other medical conditions or who are pregnant should call their health care provider for advice, because they might need to receive influenza antiviral drugs to fight the illness.

Will I - or should I - expect to be tested for H1N1 flu?

At this time testing is not usually recommended. Being tested will not change what you need to do to take care of yourself or to keep from giving it to others. Treatment will be the same as for the seasonal flu. Testing is more likely to be done only when it will help find out if the virus is present in new areas, groups of people or settings.

If I get the flu should I try to get the flu medicines – like Tamiflu?

Most people will not need to take any special prescriptions for this flu unless they have other chronic medical conditions. Call your doctor or clinic for their advice regardless of the severity of your illness. Flu medications can help make your illness milder. Your doctor or clinic will know best how to help you decide if you need these medications.

In children, what are emergency warning signs that require urgent medical attention?

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not behaving normally
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Is there anything special I should know about the flu and children?

- Do NOT give medicines with aspirin to children with the flu. A rare condition called Reye's Syndrome may happen when children with the flu take aspirin.
- Symptoms of Reye's Syndrome include severe vomiting that won't stop, being very tired and weak, and being very confused or agitated.

In adults, what are emergency warning signs that require urgent medical attention?

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

What can I do to get better?

Be good to yourself! Take it easy!

- Stay home from work or other activities if you can
- Drink plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic)
- Get plenty of rest

- Take medicines that contain acetaminophen – such as Tylenol

How long can influenza virus remain viable on objects (such as books and doorknobs)?

Studies have shown that influenza virus can survive on surfaces and can infect a person for 2 to 8 hours and may still be able to cause infection.

What kills influenza virus?

Influenza virus is destroyed by heat (167-212°F [75-100°C]). In addition, several chemicals, including chlorine, hydrogen peroxide, detergents (soap), iodine-based antiseptics, and alcohols are effective against influenza viruses if used properly and for a sufficient length of time. For example, wipes or gels with alcohol in them can be used to clean hands. The gels should be rubbed into hands until they are dry. To prevent the spread of influenza virus it is important to keep surfaces (especially bedside tables, bathroom surfaces, kitchen counters and toys) clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

Who if anyone should wear a mask, and why or why not? What about gloves?

Currently, neither is being recommended for the general public — it is more important that people wash their hands frequently, cover their mouths when they sneeze or cough, and avoid close contact with people who are ill. If you are the caregiver of someone with influenza, gloves and masks are extra steps that can be taken to protect yourself from being infected, if you are picking up used tissues or are in other close contact with the ill person.

Should you avoid going to the mall or wear masks around town? No, not at this time. People need to make decisions based on the level of risk in their particular community. Listen to the advice of your local and state health officials and follow their recommendations, check the Delaware General Health District web site www.delawarehealth.org.

Is it really as serious as they say? How likely is it that I – or someone in my family - will really get H1N1 flu?

As we expected, and from what we are seeing, there is a good chance that you or someone in your family will come in contact with the H1N1 flu. If you do – there is a good chance that you will become sick. Many will have mild symptoms, some will be more serious and unfortunately some of those will die.

Have there been confirmed cases of H1N1 in Delaware County?

Yes, there have been confirmed cases of H1N1 in Delaware County. Some of these have been serious enough to require hospitalization. In addition, many areas are reporting cases that fit the description of the illness. Since the flu is not required to be reported on a case by case basis, and not all cases are even seen by a doctor, we do not know the exact numbers of cases that have happened. All of Ohio's 88 counties are reporting increases in flu at this time.

Can I get infected with H1N1 virus from eating or preparing pork?

No. The H1N1 virus is not spread by eating or preparing any food or meat products.

What is the local Health Department doing?

- The Health District is holding public clinics for high risk, Tier 1, citizens. These groups include 1) pregnant women, 2) children ages 6 months through 18 years of age, 3) parents or caregivers of children under the age of 6 months, and 4) health care providers giving direct patient care.
- The first public clinic was held on October 26th. There were 2,333 doses of vaccine given to people attending. Please go to www.delawarehealth.org to find out when additional clinics are scheduled. You may also call 740-203-2015 or 211 to learn about additional clinic dates and locations.
- The Delaware General Health District has enlisted several private firms and local governments as flu surveillance sites in addition to schools and daycare centers. The Health District epidemiologist is tracking illness absenteeism at all of these sites.
- Health District leaders have met with school administrators and Delaware County Juvenile Court officials about the importance of sick children staying home from school this fall and winter.
- Health District nurses have trained local paramedics to give H1N1 immunizations, and initial supplies of the vaccine are being provided.
- The Health District is issuing weekly updates on the flu situation to local news media and other interested parties, and has asked local news media to help publicize the online registration option for people wanting to get the H1N1 vaccine.
- The Health District also is encouraging all local organizations, businesses, and households to take preparedness steps now in case major flu outbreaks interrupt the normal flow of goods, services, and public utilities.
- The Delaware General Health District has recruited, inspected and approved 40 local providers to order vaccine for their clients.
- The Delaware General Health District has provided information to community groups, businesses, and the public through brochures, posters, packets, and the media.
- The Health District is encouraging preventative measures since vaccine is not readily available.
- The Delaware General Health District has worked on selecting mass clinic sites that provide adequate clinic area, waiting lines, and traffic flow that are suitable for the sheriff's office.

There is a lot of information about flu available on the Internet but I'm not sure if it's all correct. Where can I find good up-to-date information on the situation from real, qualified medical or Public Health authorities?

www.delawarehealth.org – The Delaware General Health District's web site. You may also call the Delaware General Health District's Fact Line at 740-203-2015 for information in English or Spanish. In Delaware County, you may also call 211 to speak with someone in person to get basic flu information 24 hours a day.

www.flu.gov – A comprehensive easy-to-read all-in-one information source about flu.

www.odh.ohio.gov – Ohio Department of Health web site, featuring extensive information about flu. ODH also has an H1N1 toll-free information line – **1-866-800-1404** – presently staffed from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday to answer questions from the public about influenza and the vaccine.

www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu -- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's pages dedicated to the latest information on H1N1 flu.

www.cdc.gov/flu -- The CDC's pages on seasonal flu.