



Health & Safety Alert #49-10-09

H1N1 Influenza Vaccine and Planning Information

The H1N1 virus continues to cause illness, hospitalizations and deaths in the U.S. With cooler months upon us, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is concerned that the H1N1 virus could lead to a particularly severe flu season this year. The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to provide protection against H1N1 influenza; however, an H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and is expected to be available as early as mid-October.

Who is recommended to receive the H1N1 influenza vaccine?

The priority groups recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine include:

- Pregnant women because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;
- Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants younger than 6 months old might help protect infants by “cocooning” them from the virus;
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity. Personnel who care for people with developmental disabilities fall into this category;
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age
 - Children from 6 months through 18 years of age because cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza have been seen in children who are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread, and,
 - Young adults 19 through 24 years of age because many cases of 2009 H1N1 influenza have been seen in these healthy young adults and they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population; and,
- Persons ages 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza. This includes persons with heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, lung disease, or metabolic disease, such as diabetes, asthma, anemia, or other blood disorders; anyone with a weakened immune system due to HIV/AIDS or other diseases affecting the immune system, long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids, or cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs; or anyone with certain muscle or nerve disorders, such as seizure disorders or cerebral palsy, that can lead to breathing or swallowing problems.

Please note that a developmental disabilities diagnosis alone does not fall into one of the priority classifications. However, if a person with a developmental disability has a health condition that would cause him or her to be at greater risk of complications from influenza, then he or she would fall under one of the priority classifications.

How can we ensure individuals or employees who fall in one of the priority groups receive the vaccine?

Local County Boards of Developmental Disabilities and/or provider organizations must contact their local health department to coordinate assistance with vaccinations and other pandemic flu preparedness planning.

What happens once the demand for vaccination of the priority groups is met?

Once the demand for vaccine for the prioritized groups has been met at the local level, vaccinations should begin for everyone from the ages of 25 through 64 years. Current studies indicate that the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. However, once vaccine demand among younger age groups has been met, vaccination should be offered to people 65 or older.

Will the seasonal flu vaccine protect against the H1N1 flu?

No. While the seasonal flu vaccine does not protect against the H1N1 flu, you are encouraged to get a seasonal flu vaccination.

Are there other resources available for pandemic flu planning?

Yes. Pandemic flu planning resources can be found on the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities website at <http://mrdd.ohio.gov/> and on the Ohio Department of Health's website at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov/>. More detailed information will be added to the department's website in coming weeks. Residential facilities may be interested in the Long-Term Care and Other Residential Facilities Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist found at <http://www.flu.gov/professional/pdf/longtermcare.pdf>.

It is important that organizations providing support for the same individual (such as residential and day services) communicate with each other as comprehensive plans and strategies to manage during a pandemic flu are developed. During the planning process, organizations are encouraged to recognize any potential systemic ripple effects related to their planned actions, and discuss these potential impacts with the affected organizations. For example, the closing of a day program would have significant impact upon the residential provider.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

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