

Weekly Wellness Tip

H1N1 (Swine) Flu: Vaccine Safety Q&A

Is the H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine safe?

The H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine is expected to have a similar safety profile as the seasonal flu vaccine, which has a very good safety track record. Over the years, hundreds of millions of Americans have been given flu vaccines. The most common side effects following flu vaccinations are mild, such as soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given. The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are closely monitoring for any signs that the vaccine is causing unexpected adverse events. Any unusual events will be investigated with state and local health officials.

Will the benefits of the 2009 H1N1 (swine) influenza vaccines outweigh the risks?

The expectation is that a vaccine against 2009 H1N1 (swine) influenza will probably work in a similar fashion to the seasonal influenza vaccines. The CDC and FDA believe that the benefits of the H1N1 (swine) flu vaccination will far outweigh the risks. Vaccination is the best way to prevent influenza infection and its complications.

Are there people who should not receive this vaccine?

People who have a severe (life-threatening) allergy to chicken eggs or to any other substance in the vaccine should not be vaccinated.

Will there be a possibility of Guillain-Barré Syndrome cases following the 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine?

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare disease in which the body damages its own nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. In 1976, there was a small risk of GBS following swine influenza vaccination (approximately one case per 100,000 people who received the vaccine). Since then, numerous studies have been conducted to evaluate if other flu vaccines were associated with GBS. In most studies, no association was found, but two studies suggested that approximately one person out of every million vaccinated may be at risk for GBS associated with the seasonal influenza vaccine. The FDA and CDC will be closely monitoring reports of serious problems following the 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu vaccines, including GBS.

What is the best source of information for 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine safety?

In addition to talking openly with your healthcare providers, the CDC also encourages you to stay informed by checking www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu and www.flu.gov for the most up-to-date information.

Source: CDC

H1N1 (Swine) Flu Portal

Go to teamhealth.com/wellness/fluinformation for more information about H1N1 (swine) flu and resources that are available to you.