

# H1N1 Pandemic Influenza Vaccine

## Saskatchewan Immunization Program



Saskatchewan  
Ministry of  
Health

### What is H1N1 pandemic influenza?

- H1N1 influenza is an infectious disease of the respiratory tract caused by the H1N1 virus. The H1N1 flu virus is new, so people have little or no natural immunity to it.
- The World Health Organization declared a pandemic because this new virus spreads easily and infected humans globally. Most illness is mild but severe disease and deaths have occurred.
- H1N1 influenza was identified in Canada in May, 2009. An increase in cases of H1N1 is expected during the late fall and winter.
- Influenza is spread by coughing, sneezing or through direct contact.
- Symptoms of influenza include sudden fever and cough and one or more of: sore throat, muscle aches, joint pain, and weakness.
- Vomiting/diarrhea may be present in children and fever is not always prominent with H1N1 especially in the elderly.

### How can you prevent this disease?

- Be immunized against H1N1 influenza.
- Practice good hygiene, including:
  - frequent hand washing,
  - coughing or sneezing into a tissue and throwing it in the garbage immediately, coughing into your sleeve if a tissue is not available. Then wash your hands, and
  - cleaning touched surfaces frequently using regular household cleaners.

### What types of H1N1 vaccines are available for H1N1 Pandemic Influenza?

There will be two presentations of the vaccine.

- **Unadjuvanted** vaccine contains inactivated (killed) viral antigens, thimerosal, formaldehyde, sodium deoxycholate and sucrose and the virus is grown in eggs. Test has shown the unadjuvanted vaccine to be 95% effective in producing an immune response.

- **Adjuvanted** vaccine contains all above constituents plus an adjuvant, AS03 (the adjuvant is an oil-in-water emulsion containing, Squalene, DL- $\alpha$ -tocopherol and polysorbate-80). Adjuvanted vaccine is 98% effective in producing an immune response.

These vaccines are authorized, and approved by the Canadian regulatory authority, the Biologics and Genetic Therapies Directorate (BGTD).

### Who can get the H1N1 influenza vaccine free of charge in Saskatchewan?

- All persons in Saskatchewan are eligible to receive the H1N1 influenza vaccine free of charge.
- Immunization clinics will begin with certain groups of higher risk people and then everyone will have an opportunity to receive the vaccine as quickly as the vaccine becomes available.
- Those **who will benefit most** from immunization include:

- People under 65 years of age with chronic health conditions.
- Pregnant women.

**Note:** If you are pregnant, or think you could be pregnant, tell your health care provider as this may affect the vaccine recommended for you.

- Children aged 6 months to less than 5 years of age.
- People living in remote/isolated communities.
- Health care workers involved in pandemic response or the delivery of essential health care services.
- Household contacts and care providers of persons at high risk who cannot be immunized or may not respond to vaccines.
- Populations otherwise identified as high risk by the Ministry of Health or the Public Health Agency of Canada.

## Others who would benefit from immunization include:

- Children from 5 years to 18 years of age.
- First responders.
- Poultry and swine workers.
- Healthy adults aged 19 to 64 years of age.
- Adults aged 65 years and older.
- People living in special care-home and long-term care facilities.

## How many doses of the vaccine are required?

- Two half doses of adjuvanted vaccine is recommended for people aged 6 months to 9 years of age.
- 1 dose adjuvanted vaccine is sufficient for people 10 years of age and older.
- 1 dose unadjuvanted vaccine is preferred for pregnant women. However, adjuvanted vaccine is also safe in pregnancy. Ask your public health nurse for information.

## Who should not get the vaccine?

- Infants younger than 6 months of age.
- You currently have a high fever.
- Persons who have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of an influenza vaccine or its constituents or other serious allergies such as difficulty breathing, swelling of face, mouth, throat and anaphylaxis.
- Persons who have a serious illness, with or without fever, should delay immunization. A mild illness, with or without fever, is not a reason to avoid immunization.
- Anyone who has developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome within 8 weeks of receiving a seasonal flu vaccine.
- You have a hypersensitivity to eggs (e.g. hives, swelling of mouth and /or throat, breathing difficult).

## How safe is the H1N1 flu vaccine?

- Clinical trials from several countries around the world have shown the H1N1 flu vaccine to be safe and effective for protecting your self against the H1N1 flu virus.

## What are the possible reactions to the vaccine?

- Pain, soreness, redness, swelling or bruising at the injection site;
- Other reactions are generally mild and may include headache, fever, chills and muscle aches; loss of appetite; nausea, vomiting and diarrhea; and body rash/redness.

## Who should you report vaccine reactions to?

- Report any adverse or unexpected reactions to your local public health nurse, your doctor or HealthLine as soon as possible.
- Talk to your public health nurse if:
  - you have questions or concerns about your reaction or your child's reaction to the immunization.
  - you or your child had to go to your doctor, hospital or health centre with an illness that might be related to immunization.

*Your immunization information will be recorded in a computerized system known as the Saskatchewan Immunization Management System (SIMS). Information collected in SIMS may be used to:*

- *manage immunization records,*
- *notify you if you or your child needs an immunization,*
- *monitor how well vaccines work in preventing vaccine preventable diseases.*

*Your immunization records may also be shared with health care professionals in order to provide public health services; assist with diagnosis and treatment; and to control the spread of vaccine preventable diseases.*

**For more information, contact:  
your local public health office, or  
your physician, or  
HealthLine at 1-877-800-0002**