

## H1N1 (swine) Flu Shots: Facts and Fiction!

There is a lot of information out there right now about the H1N1 vaccine, some of which is accurate and some that is not founded in sound, scientific information. Getting the H1N1 flu shot is a personal decision. The information below is provided to help make an informed choice about getting vaccinated and to dispel many of the myths that surround this topic!

### **Fact Or Fiction?**

#### **I'm afraid to get the flu shot because I heard people can get the flu from it.**

**Fiction!** Whether the seasonal flu or H1N1 flu shot, neither contain a live vaccine. Therefore, it isn't possible to "get the flu from the flu shot". Some people have gotten the flu after receiving a flu shot because they had already been exposed prior to the vaccine being effective. For the H1N1 shot, it takes about 10 days for a person to be protected against H1N1.

Flu Mist, the nasal spray form of the vaccine is a live vaccine. However, it contains a minute amount of the virus – not enough to catch the flu but enough to develop immunity to H1N1.

#### **I've heard the vaccine isn't safe because it was rushed through the testing process.**

#### **Fiction!**

The clinical trials to test the H1N1 vaccine were done to determine its effectiveness as a vaccine, not for safety reasons. Since it is manufactured in the same manner as the seasonal flu vaccine, it had been determined to be as safe as the seasonal flu shot:

"The H1N1 pandemic flu vaccine is made exactly the same way by the same manufacturers with the same processing, the same materials, as we make seasonal flu vaccine, which has an extraordinarily good safety record," says Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Disease. The new H1N1 vaccine has gotten more scientific scrutiny than seasonal flu vaccines do, he adds. "We don't even do those [clinical trials] with the seasonal flu vaccine," he says. But in this case the tests were needed so scientists and manufacturers could know how big a dose would be necessary to get a protective immune response."

#### **I heard that the side effects of the vaccine might be bad.**

#### **Fiction!**

The CDC expects that any side effects following vaccination with the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine would be rare. If side effects occur, they will likely be similar to those experienced following seasonal influenza vaccine. Mild problems that may be experienced include soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea. If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1-2 days. Life-threatening allergic reactions to vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot is given.

**I had the swine flu already so I don't need the vaccine.**

**Fiction!**

It is true that people who contract the H1N1 virus should theoretically build up immunity protection against catching it again. However, since this particular virus is a novel strain that has never been seen before, experts like the CDC have not had the opportunity to research and confirm this for H1N1. Another variable is that most people who were diagnosed with the H1N1 flu did not have confirmed laboratory testing to know definitely that their flu was H1N1. Based on this, the CDC recommends that even those who were diagnosed with H1N1 since last spring receive the H1N1 vaccine, especially those in high risk groups. The vaccine will not harm those that had H1N1 but will protect them against future infection.

**What's the big deal? More people die from the seasonal flu than H1N1. I heard it is pretty mild anyway.**

**Fact – kind of!**

It is true that more people typically die from the seasonal flu than have already died from H1N1 this year. It is also true that many have mild forms of the flu and recover quickly. What is concerning about H1N1 is that it is highly contagious – every person who gets it infects 2 or 3 other people. Also many are quite ill with flu-like symptoms. And even healthy individuals such as children, young adults and pregnant women have died due to severe complications from H1N1.

**I am allergic to eggs so I can't get the vaccine.**

**Fact – kind of!**

You should not get the H1N1 flu shot if you have a severe (life-threatening) allergy to eggs, or to any other substance in the vaccine. If you have allergies of this type, ask your health care provider for guidance regarding vaccination for H1N1 influenza.

**If I get the flu, I could miss at least 5 days of classes!**

**Fact!**

This is very true! The current CDC recommendations and the University's policies are:

- If you have the flu, stay home from work and/or classes
- Self isolate at home, restricting interaction with others for 5 days, or until there is no longer a fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. Wear a face mask if it is necessary to be with others at home.
- Resident students will be instructed to return home on self isolation and will not be allowed to stay in their residence hall except under extenuating circumstances.

**The best way to stay in class, remain healthy, and avoid the H1N1 flu is to get vaccinated.**

**Fact!**

The number one defense against H1N1 influenza is to be vaccinated.