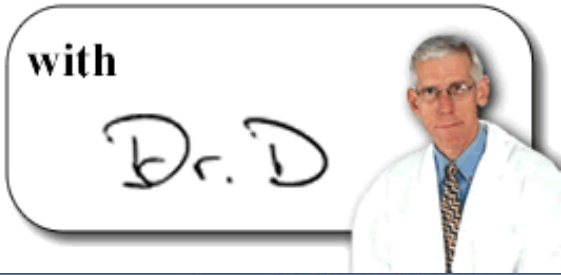




Health Tips

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Health Tip: Who Should Receive the Swine Flu (H1N1) Vaccine?

Five manufacturers are working furiously to prepare a vaccine for a predicted pandemic of the Swine (now known as H1N1) influenza. This vaccine will not replace the "flu shot" that is traditionally given in the fall to protect against seasonal influenza, but will be given to provide protection against this "novel" strain of influenza. At present, manufacturers are somewhat behind in their production of this vaccine. It appears that somewhere around 45 million doses

will be available by mid-October, with another 20 million doses becoming available weekly until the 195 million contracted doses have been produced.



Because of this staggered production schedule, and since certain individuals require protection more than others, the CDC has recommended that the following groups receive the H1N1 influenza vaccine first:

- **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 less 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
- **All people from 6 months through 24 years of age**
 - **Children from 6 months through 18 years of age** because we have seen many cases of novel H1N1 influenza in children and they are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread

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- **Young adults 19 through 24 years of age** because we have seen many cases of novel H1N1 influenza in these healthy young adults and they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population

- **Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.**

Combined, these groups would equal approximately 159 million individuals, well within the amount that is planned for production. Once the vaccine has been administered to these higher-risk groups, the CDC recommends that those in the 25 to 64 year old age group should be the next to undergo immunization. This recommendation is based on studies that indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. Older individuals may have been exposed to a similar virus in the past and possess partial immunity. Once vaccine demand among the 25 to 64 year old age group has been met, the vaccine will then be offered to people over 65 years of age.

The H1N1 virus remains susceptible to two common antiviral drugs, Tamiflu and Relenza. Treatment of influenza, however, will at best decrease the length of illness by a day or so. Assuming the vaccine under production turns out to be safe and effective, receiving the immunization for H1N1 influenza can prevent the disease from developing in the first place.

Other methods for preventing the spread of H1N1 influenza are:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.



From April 15, 2009 to July 24, 2009, 43,771 cases of novel influenza A (H1N1) infection were confirmed by the CDC. Since not everyone with an influenza-like illness receives testing to confirm the specific viral type, however, it has been estimated that more, as many as one million people in the U.S., have been infected with H1N1 flu. We are already starting to see an increase in the number of cases of H1N1 influenza in this country. Just last week, there were 100 suspected H1N1 flu cases at Georgia Tech and more cases can be expected as fall classes begin. If you are in one of the high priority groups, stay alert for announcements of the H1N1 vaccine availability or Ask eDoc at **eDocAmerica** if you need more information on H1N1 immunization.

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