

PANDEMIC (H1N1) 2009 INFLUENZA VACCINE

Immunization continues to be our best defence against influenza. Influenza is an infection of the lungs and airways caused by various strains of influenza virus that circulate throughout the world each year. In North America, influenza virus usually affects people between November and April - our influenza season. Each year vaccine is produced to protect people against the strains of influenza expected to be circulating during the winter influenza season.

This coming winter season, Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza A is expected to be the predominant influenza strain circulating in Alberta, but other seasonal strains may also circulate and cause illness over the season.

What are the symptoms of pandemic (H1N1) influenza?

The symptoms of Pandemic (H1N1) influenza are the same as seasonal influenza. The most common symptoms are:

- Sudden onset of cough and
- Fever (temperature of 38°C/100.4°F or higher)

Other common symptoms may include:

- Tiredness (fatigue)
- Headache and muscle aches
- Loss of appetite
- Sore throat and runny nose

With pandemic (H1N1) influenza, individuals will sometimes have nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Most people who get pandemic (H1N1) influenza have mild symptoms and get better within a week without medical treatment. A small number of people develop more severe symptoms and require hospitalization. If you develop more severe symptoms, you need to see a health care provider right away. More severe symptoms are

- Shortness of breath (rapid or difficult breathing)
- Chest pain

How can pandemic (H1N1) influenza disease be prevented?

- Get the pandemic (H1N1) influenza vaccine
- Wash your hands often
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing
- Maintain a good health by taking care of yourself and those in your care
- Stay home when you are sick

What is the Pandemic (H1N1) Vaccine?

Pandemic (H1N1) vaccine protects against the new pandemic (H1N1) 2009 strain of influenza. It does not protect against seasonal influenza. Most people will develop immunity 10-14 days after receiving the pandemic (H1N1) vaccine.

Who should get the pandemic (H1N1) vaccine?

Pandemic (H1N1) vaccine is recommended for all Albertans six months of age or older

Those who would benefit most from the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- Children 6 months to less than 5 years of age
- Person under 65 years of age with chronic health conditions
- Aboriginal populations
- Health care workers
- Household contacts/care providers of infants less than 6 months of age and persons who are immunocompromised

Who should not get the vaccine?

If you have a severe allergic reaction to eggs or chicken, it is not recommended. Also children younger than six months of age should not get the vaccine.

Are pandemic (H1N1) influenza and seasonal influenza vaccines safe?

Yes. You cannot get influenza disease from the vaccines. In Canada, vaccines undergo rigorous testing and licensing procedures with the federal government before they are introduced.

What are the possible side effects of this vaccine?

Reactions that do occur are usually mild and are over within 48 hours. For a day or two, you may have:

- Redness, mild pain and/or swelling where the injection was given;
- Irritability and/or tiredness
- Mild fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and pains;

As with any immunization, unexpected or unusual side effects can occur. Severe reactions are very rare. Call Health Link Alberta or speak to your health care provider for more information.

What should you do if you have a reaction to the vaccine?

- For pain or swelling where the injection was given, place a cool damp towel on the area.
- For pain or fever, take acetaminophen (also called Tylenol®) as directed on the container. Adults can also use other pain killers of their choice.

Note: Acetylsalicylic acid (ASA) or Aspirin® is not recommended for persons under 18 years of age because of the increased risk of Reye’s syndrome.

- Drink extra fluids (water, fruit juice) if you develop a fever
- Call Health Link Alberta or your local public health nurse if you have questions or if you or your child has an unusual reaction to the vaccine.
- Call 911 if you have a medical emergency.

Where can I get the pandemic (H1N1) influenza immunization?

All of these clinics are drop-in only; no appointments necessary. Please bring your AHC card and a photo identification. Also please bring your English address with you. Please call Healthlink Alberta to find out whether you are eligible to get the H1N1 vaccination: Mandarin Health Link Calgary 403-943-1554, Cantonese Health Link Calgary 403-943-1556 Toll Free 1-866-408-LINK(5465). Currently H1N1 vaccination is only available to high risk groups, however, will be open to general public once more supply of vaccine is available.

Calgary locations:

Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 8:00pm, Friday to Sunday, 8:30am to 3:30pm

1. Richmond Road Diagnostic Treatment Centre, 1820 Richmond Road SW Calgary, T2T 5C7
2. Avenida Village, Unit 303, 12445 Lake Fraser Drive SE Calgary, T2J 7A4
3. Brentwood Village Mall, Unit 302, 3630 Brentwood Road NW Calgary, T2L 1K8
4. EMS Whitehorn, 100, 3705-35 Street NE Calgary, T1Y 6C2
5. Stampede Grounds(Grandstand) 1410 Olympic Way Calgary AB T2G 2W1 (NEW)
6. Olympic Oval, U of C, 2500 University Dr NW T2N 1N4

Edmonton locations:

Monday to Thursday, 09:00am to 08:00pm, Fridays to Sunday, 09:00am to 4:00pm

1. Westmount Centre, Gorad Road and 111 Avenue, Edmonton, T5M 3L7
2. Northgate Centre, 9499-137 Avenue, Edmonton, T5E 5R8
3. Bonnie Doon Shopping Centre, 82 Avenue and 83 Street, T6C 1L1
4. Millbourne Mall, 7609 38 Ave, Edmonton, T6K 3L6
5. Rutherford Health Centre, 11153-Ellerslie Road, 2nd floor, Edmonton, T6W 0E9
6. Commonwealth Stadium – 11000 Stadium Road Edmonton Central and West AB T5J 2R7 (NEW)



“Road to Healthy Living”

Title of published newspaper articles and radio series from Alberta Health Services in various ethno-cultural publications to increase and promote health awareness among ethno-cultural communities.

For any other locations in Alberta, please go to: <http://www4.albertahealthservices.ca/immunization/> and find location near you, or please call Health Link Alberta.

To get more information about vaccination, contact your family doctor or speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free. Mandarin Health Link Calgary 403-943-1554, Cantonese Health Link Calgary 403-943-1556.

Source: Alberta Health Services Website, www.albertahealthservices.ca, Influenza Vaccine, Health and Wellness website, www.health.alberta.ca/health-info/imm-influenza.html

If you want to read any of the previous ‘Road To Healthy Living’ series articles, please go to http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/programs/diversity/multilingual_health_services.htm and get health information in your own language.