

**ALEXANDRIA HEALTH DEPARTMENT
H1N1 Vaccine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

(Updated 11/5/2009)

The City of Alexandria and the Alexandria Health Department (AHD) will be offering 2009 H1N1 flu vaccinations in a variety of locations, including schools, the health department, and mass vaccination clinics located in different parts of the City. Vaccine will be offered as doses become available. Due to manufacturer delays, vaccine is being shipped to health departments and other providers in limited quantities.

If you have general questions about 2009 H1N1 influenza or the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, please call the Virginia Department of Health information line, at 1-877-ASK-VDH1 (1-877-275-8343).

How can I get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?

The Alexandria Health Department (AHD) has been receiving small amounts of vaccine and is providing it to target groups as we receive it. There are also several other ways to obtain the vaccine:

- Contact your physician to determine if he or she has registered to be a 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine provider.
- Some pharmacy chains will be providing the vaccine. Check with your local pharmacy to see if you can get the vaccine at their location.
- The AHD is initially providing the vaccine to pregnant women, preschoolers, and caregivers of infants less than 6 months old. People under the age of 24 years, and people under the age of 65 years with chronic illnesses, such as asthma, or conditions that affect the immune system, are the next group who should receive the vaccine.
- The AHD held a large clinic on October 31, where about 1,500 2009 H1N1 flu shots were given. Vaccine will be made available on weekends in November and December at additional mass clinics once adequate vaccine supplies arrive. Information about times and locations will be provided at www.alexandriava.gov/flu, and via local news. You can also call the Alexandria Health Department, at 703-838-4400 ext. 352, to get the latest information on where the vaccine will be provided.
- As supplies permit, we are providing vaccine BY APPOINTMENT ONLY to people in the highest-risk groups (especially pregnant women and pre-schoolers). The availability of appointments changes from day to

day. People in these target groups should call the Casey Health Center at 703-519-5979 ext. 252 to request an appointment.

Will 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine be given in private schools?

- The AHD is working with private schools to ensure access to vaccine for their students. Please check with your school to determine if they have a plan for providing the vaccine at school.

Will the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine be given in preschools? How can my younger child receive the vaccine?

- Younger children can receive vaccine through their pediatricians, by going to clinics through pharmacies, through scheduled appointments at the Casey Health Center (see above), or by attending a mass vaccination clinic held by the AHD.

Is the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine safe?

- The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine was developed in exactly the same way as the seasonal flu vaccine is developed every year. The FDA has approved the safety and efficacy of the vaccine because of successful clinical trials.

My child has been ill in the last few days. Can he still get the vaccine?

- Yes. If your child is well enough to attend school, and is not running a fever, it is safe for him to get the vaccine.

If I had 2009 H1N1 flu, should I still get the vaccine?

- If you had H1N1 confirmed by a health department as part of an outbreak, you do not need to get the vaccine. If you were sick with flu-like symptoms this year, you should still get the vaccine. There are many viruses that cause flu-like symptoms and, while you may have had the flu, it is possible you did not have the 2009 H1N1 flu strain and thus would not have protection against it if you are not vaccinated.

How much will the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine cost?

- The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is free if you get it directly through a health department. Other places that provide the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine may charge an administration fee which may or may not be covered by your insurance. The amount should be less than \$20.

What if I am not in one of the priority groups, but need to get the vaccine soon because I will be traveling?

- The focus right now is on vaccinating those people at highest risk of serious complications from 2009 H1N1 flu. The AHD is targeting these populations in our vaccine distribution. We recommend contacting your healthcare provider to determine if they have received the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination.

I am a cancer survivor who is not considered immunosuppressed. Am I a target population?

- Yes. You are considered as part of a priority group.

Do I need to provide evidence of an underlying medical condition (i.e., a doctor's note confirming I have asthma) in order to receive vaccine and be considered a member of a priority group?

- No, we do not require documentation of underlying medical conditions.

Is it safe to get the seasonal flu vaccine and the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine at the same time?

- It depends on what form of the vaccine you receive. If you were administered an injection for your vaccine, you can get both shots at the same time. If you received a nasal spray vaccination for seasonal flu, it is safe to get an injection for 2009 H1N1 flu at any time, and vice versa. However, if you received either vaccine in the nasal spray form and wish to receive the other in the nasal spray form, you will need to wait 30 days between vaccines.

If I do not live in Alexandria, can I still receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine through the Alexandria Health Department?

- Yes.

My child is under ten years old and received the first dose of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. When should he or she get the second vaccine dose and do I need to make an appointment for this?

- The CDC recommends a minimum three-week interval between the two doses, with at least four weeks being optimum. The immunization record card given to your child when he or she received the first dose will have written on it the earliest date for receiving the second dose. Again, this interval is a minimum, so if five or six weeks pass before your child receives the second dose, he or she will still have full immunity after the second dose.
- If your child received the first dose in an Alexandria City Public School, he or she will also be receiving the second dose in school. However,

with limited vaccine supplies at this time, we are focusing on getting every student vaccinated with at least the first dose before returning to provide the second dose. The first dose alone does provide some immunity against influenza.

Does the vaccine contain thimerosal?

- Thimerosal is used as a preservative in multi-dose vaccine vials to prevent bacterial contamination. Numerous studies have shown it is safe, with no short-term or long-term side effects.
- At this time, AHD only has multi-dose injectable vaccine which contains thimerosal. AHD has requested single dose thimerosal-free injectable vaccine, but we do not know when or if we will receive any. The live attenuated vaccine (LAIV) that comes in the form of the nasal mist does not contain thimerosal. AHD expects to receive more of the LAIV but does not have any available at this time. Nasal vaccine (LAIV) can be given to people between the ages of 2-49 who do not have asthma and are not pregnant.

How long does it take for the vaccine to start working?

- For adults, it takes about two weeks after the injection or nasal mist for the vaccine to be fully effective.

What is the incubation period for 2009 H1N1?

- The estimated incubation period (the time from being exposed to the flu to becoming ill) is unknown, but could range from one day to one week. It is most likely between one and four days. Individuals who are ill with 2009 H1N1 flu should be considered contagious for up to seven days after they first feel ill. They should stay home from work and other activities until 24 hours after the fever ends, without using medicines like Tylenol or Advil to reduce the fever.