

Frequently asked questions about H1N1 influenza

When can my child receive the 2nd dose?

All children under the age of 10 years need 2 doses of the H1N1 influenza vaccine. The second dose cannot be given sooner than 30 days from the 1st dose. There is no concern if it is greater than 30 days but should be given within a reasonable length of time (we suggest 2-3 wks). If the second dose is not received, children will not get full immunity.

Why is the vaccine not recommended for people over the age of 65 years?

There has been very little 2009 H1N1 illness reported in people 65 and over since the 2009 H1N1 virus emerged. Surveillance of who is most likely to be infected with the H1N1 flu shows that people over 65 are the LEAST LIKELY to get sick with the virus, while younger people are much more likely to become ill.

Why people 65 and older are the least likely to be infected with the 2009 H1N1 flu is not completely understood, but may be due to underlying immunity developed after exposure to a similar flu virus that they had as children. However, if those over 65 become ill, they are likely to develop serious complications from the illness. Thus, people 65 years and older are prioritized for treatment with antiviral drugs this season if they do become ill. They should receive a seasonal flu shot and a pneumonia vaccination.

Who sets the priority groups and why are they necessary?

The priority groups are determined by the national Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (a group of health care providers, academic, and other experts in vaccinations). These recommendations for vaccine use are based on knowledge of which populations are being most severely affected by the virus, and which populations are most likely to spread the virus. Because there is currently not enough vaccine available for widespread use in Tama County, the vaccine available will target those at highest risk of becoming ill and developing complications. These groups include: pregnant women, persons caring for or living with children under six months of age (6 months and under cannot receive the vaccine), all children 6 months to 24 years with or without medical conditions, health care providers, civil service workers (EMT, law officers) and adults 25 to 64 years **with chronic** medical conditions. Chronic medical conditions include: diabetes, lung conditions (including asthma), cardiovascular conditions, renal, liver, neurologic, neuromuscular and immunodeficiency and those taking immunosuppressant medication. Severe obesity and heavy cigarette smokers are included in the high risk category.

What if I do not have a doctor to sign an authorization form to get the vaccine?

Only persons over the age of 25 with medical conditions now need proof that they are eligible to receive the vaccine. If you do not have a doctor, please contact Tama County Public Health and ask for Joyce or Linda to assist you. We want to make sure everyone that is eligible to receive the vaccine gets it.

When will the general public be able to get the H1N1 vaccination?

Eventually, as the H1N1 vaccine becomes more widely available, we will be offering it anyone in Tama County that wants it. We need to vaccinate our highest risk people first which we hope to have done by the first of the year. Until that time, it remains important to take personal actions to prevent the spread of the virus by covering your cough, cleaning your hands, and containing germs by staying home when you are ill.

Please continue to check our website at www.tamacounty.org and our automated phone line at 641-484-3026 for updated information.