

Lenawee County Health Department H1N1 Nasal Spray Vaccine Fact Sheet

Does the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine contain a live virus?

Unlike the injectable H1N1 flu shot, the H1N1 nasal spray flu vaccine does contain live viruses. However, the viruses used in this vaccine are attenuated (weakened) and cannot cause flu illness. Once the vaccine is sprayed into the nostrils, the vaccine grows well in the nose and throat. But once the virus reaches the lower respiratory tract, the body's heat kills the virus. This means the vaccine, unlike actual influenza viruses, cannot replicate and cause disease. Flu vaccine cannot give you the flu. Several other vaccines are also made with a live (weakened) virus including measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox and zoster vaccines.

Who Should Get the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine?

It is recommended for use in "healthy" people 2 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant. "Healthy" is defined as persons who do not have an underlying medical condition that tends to make them susceptible to flu complications. Individuals with asthma or other lung diseases as well as children under the age of 5 years with recurrent wheezing should not receive the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine. Health care professionals working with severely immunosuppressed patients should not get the nasal spray vaccine.

What are the benefits of the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine?

- 1) The H1N1 nasal spray vaccine is a good option for those who don't like needles. The vaccine is given via a nasal sprayer. It's a quick spray in each nostril; one of the places where the flu virus commonly enters the body. Once administered, the vaccine helps your body develop proteins called antibodies that help protect you from the flu.
- 2) It does not contain thimerosal or any other preservatives.
- 3) For every person who is eligible and willing to receive the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine, a dose of the H1N1 shot (in limited supply) is saved for someone who cannot get the nasal spray vaccine because of age or underlying medical conditions.
- 4) The nasal spray flu vaccine can be given at the same time or around the same time as an inactivated (killed) vaccine or any other live vaccine except for the seasonal flu nasal spray vaccine. This is because the nasal spray vaccines might not be as effective if given together. It is fine to receive the H1N1 nasal spray at the same time as the seasonal influenza (flu) shot, or the seasonal flu nasal spray at the same time as the H1N1 flu shot.



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Was the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine made too quickly without time for testing or research?

The H1N1 nasal spray vaccine being used in the United States is made by MedImmune, the same company that makes the seasonal nasal spray vaccine called FluMist. The 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine is being made using the same manufacturing process that has been used since 2003 to make the seasonal nasal spray vaccine. The only difference is that it is made to specifically target a strain of flu (H1N1 Influenza A) that wasn't already included in the seasonal flu vaccine this year. Tens of millions of doses of FluMist have been given in the United States since 2003.

Can people receiving the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine pass the vaccine viruses to others?

The likelihood of shedding virus is very low and the virus strains in the nasal spray vaccine are too weak to cause clinically important flu disease. The nasal spray vaccine is safe for most health care workers except those working with severely immunosuppressed patients such as bone marrow or stem cell transplant patients. There has never been a documented transmission of the virus from the vaccine in a health care setting.

What are the possible side effects from H1N1 nasal spray vaccine?

The majority of children and adults experience no reaction or very mild reactions to receiving the vaccine. Mild reactions may include runny nose, nasal congestion or headache. These side effects are mild and short-lasting, especially when compared to symptoms of actually getting H1N1. No serious adverse reactions have been identified in children or adults receiving nasal flu vaccines.

Where can I find out more information about H1N1 and the H1N1 nasal spray vaccine?

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1 or call 2-1-1.

Fact sheet adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website www.cdc.gov/h1n1, information received from the Michigan Dept of Community Health & flumist.com.

