



## JEFFERSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

405 MAIN STREET

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### H1N1 INFLUENZA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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#### BACKGROUND

On April 26, 2009, the Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency as a result of the detection of 20 known cases of individuals infected by a swine-origin influenza A virus, now known as novel Influenza A (H1N1), in the United States. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization declared the first pandemic in over 40 years in recognition of widespread, sustained human-to-human transmission of the virus in multiple regions around the globe. While Jefferson County Health Department has made significant progress since 2005 in preparing for a potential influenza pandemic, gaps still exist in the county's preparedness and ability to respond to repeated waves of an influenza pandemic. In a pandemic, time is a critical factor in the production, delivery, and administration of vaccines, antiviral drugs, and other medical countermeasures required to reduce the effects of a pandemic. Lessons learned from past influenza pandemics indicate that influenza can strike a community, affect many individuals, and then appear to go away, only to come back to strike the community months later, possibly in a more severe manner.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- **Q: What is the difference between seasonal and H1N1 influenza?**

A: The H1N1 strain of influenza currently circulating is a new strain for which most people have no natural immunity. Seasonal influenza includes strains that have circulated previously.

- **Q: What interventions are available for H1N1 influenza?**

A: In the event of a possible pandemic, reducing transmission could be accomplished by increasing immunity to the virus through vaccination and reducing exposure to the virus. Community mitigation measures could also reduce people's exposure to the virus throughout all phases of the vaccine campaign. States should plan for both vaccination and community mitigation activities, which can be complemented by use of antiviral drugs.

- **Q: Will the seasonal vaccine protect me against H1N1 influenza?**

A: No. Production of the seasonal vaccine began before the outbreak of H1N1 influenza, and does not contain the novel strain and as a result does not protect against it. Seasonal vaccine is still recommended for everyone, especially those 65 and older. Seasonal vaccine will be available beginning in September. Information and schedules will be made available as soon as possible.

- **Q: Does this mean I need a second vaccine?**

A: Some individuals at high risk for both types of influenza should receive both vaccines. The H1N1 vaccine will require two shots given 21 days apart.

- **Q: How much H1N1 vaccine will be available?**



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A: It is anticipated that Missouri will get an initial supply of approximately 800,000 doses and will then continue to receive about 200,000 additional doses each week. Each county will be allocated doses based on its population.

- **Q: How much will immunization cost?**

A: The federal government is purchasing the H1N1 vaccine and will provide it to citizens at no charge. It is possible that the Federal Government will reimburse providers a \$15/dose administration fee, **but a final decision has not been made.**

- **Q: How will vaccine be distributed?**

A: Vaccine will be sent to Jefferson County Health Department, who will then distribute it to participating providers as well as schedule immunization clinics targeting high risk groups.

- **Q: Who should get the H1N1 vaccine?**

A: Jefferson County Health Department is required by federal regulations to only provide H1N1 vaccine to the following high risk groups:

- Pregnant women
- Household and caregiver contacts of children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct medical contact with patients or infectious materials
- Children 6 months through 4 years old
- Children with chronic medical conditions under 19 years of age
- Children and young adults ages 5 years through 24 years
- Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have medical conditions which put them at high risk for complications or death from influenza

- **Q: What medical conditions result in high risk for complications?**

A: Pregnancy, immune suppression, chronic kidney disease, heart disease, diabetes, asthma or other problems of the lungs are known to increase the possibility of complications from influenza.

- **Q: If I am not in a high risk group for H1N1 immunization, or if I want to protect myself before vaccine is available, what can I do?**

A: Frequent hand washing with soap and water is most important; hand sanitizers can be used when soap and water are not available. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. Schools and businesses should encourage people to stay home if they are sick. Sanitize commonly touched surfaces such as keyboards, telephones, or door knobs.

- **Q: Where can I get additional information?**

A: The Centers for Disease Control has an extensive amount of H1N1 information on its website, [www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu) as well as a hotline, 1-800-232-4636. Jefferson County Health Department's website, [www.jeffcohealth.org](http://www.jeffcohealth.org), has information specific to Jefferson County. You can also call JCHD at 636-797-3737, extension 118.