

City of Newton



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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Frequently Asked Questions about H1N1 Vaccination for Newton parents

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Should my child get the H1N1 flu vaccine?

All children age six months through 18 years should get the H1N1 flu vaccine (the shot or the nasal spray), unless they have one or more of these contraindications:

- An allergy to chicken eggs
- A severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past
- History of Guillain-Barré syndrome
- Currently sick with a fever (these people can get vaccinated once their symptoms lessen)

If my child got sick with flu symptoms, should s/he get the vaccine?

Unless your child had a specific laboratory test called RT-PCR that confirmed s/he had H1N1 influenza, it's possible that s/he had something other than H1N1. RT-PCR is different from rapid flu tests that doctors can do in their offices. Most people with flu-like illness are not tested using RT-PCR. Therefore, most people who had flu-like illness during the spring, summer or early fall should get vaccinated if their doctor recommends it. If your child had confirmed H1N1 influenza s/he should have some protection (immunity) against H1N1 flu, although we don't know how much. Getting vaccinated is not harmful, and may provide additional protection.

How many doses of H1N1 flu vaccine does my child need?

Age 6 months through 9 years: 2 doses spaced one month apart

10 years and older: 1 dose

Where can my child get his/her second dose of the vaccine?

The Health & Human Services Department is planning to vaccinate children in school during the month of December. It does not matter if this dose is your child's first dose or second dose, as long as the second dose is at least one month after the first dose. Second doses for children who receive a first dose from the health department at school can be obtained from the child's health care provider, at a public clinic, or at a Newton Health Department clinic to be announced in January.

My child attends private school. Will s/he be vaccinated at school?

The Health Department is working with private schools in Newton on H1N1 vaccination planning. Check with the private school nurse to see what the plan for your child's school is. If your child attends a private school outside of Newton, check with the school nurse there to see if a clinic is being planned. If one is not planned, contact the Newton Health Department or your neighborhood school nurse to find out when that school's clinic is scheduled. You may bring your child to your neighborhood school on the regularly scheduled date to be vaccinated.

Are seasonal and H1N1 vaccines safe?

Yes, seasonal and H1N1 vaccines are among the safest medications that are administered to people, including prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications. Like any vaccine or medication, seasonal and H1N1 vaccines should be administered by trained health professionals who will determine which vaccine is best suited to each patient. A patient with an allergy to eggs, for example, should avoid vaccines derived from eggs in order to avoid an allergic reaction to the vaccine. Most people who get seasonal or H1N1 flu vaccine do not experience any side effects, and those that do experience side effects have mild symptoms, like soreness at the site of the flu shot, or a runny nose after having the nasal spray. Serious side effects are extremely rare. More information is available in the Vaccine Information Statement online at www.newtonma.gov/flu.

H1N1 vaccine is being made exactly the same way seasonal flu vaccine is made every year, and with the same testing process required before distribution. It is as safe as seasonal influenza vaccine. Vaccines are tested in people before they are approved for wider use. Vaccines are only approved for wider use if the testing (called a “clinical trial”) shows that the vaccines are safe to use. Once vaccines are approved and are being used throughout the country, any problem following vaccination should be reported by healthcare providers to a national reporting system. This reporting of “adverse events” allows the safety of the vaccine to be continuously monitored.

Flu can be a serious respiratory disease. Getting vaccinated to be protected from the flu outweighs the very small risk of side effects from both seasonal and H1N1 vaccines.

Is it true that people will be forced to get vaccinated for H1N1 flu?

No. (Although there have been rumors that DPH or other health officials will require or force residents of Massachusetts to be vaccinated for the H1N1 flu, the rumors are ***simply not true.***) The decision to get vaccinated for both seasonal and H1N1 flu is ***completely voluntary*** and an individual decision. The vaccine is NOT required for school attendance.

Where can I get more information?

- Ask your school nurse
- Call the Newton Health & Human Services Department at 617-796-1420
- Mass 2-1-1 provides flu information for the general public: call **211** or 1-877-211-MASS (6277). Interpreter services available in many languages.
- Call your primary health care provider
- Call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Immunization Program at: (617) 983-6800 or toll-free at (888) 658-2850
- City of Newton flu website at www.newtonma.gov/flu
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health website at mass.gov/flu
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at: www.cdc.gov/flu