



H1N1-2009 Influenza Vaccine (Arepanrix) Information Sheet

What are influenza and the pandemic H1N1 influenza?

Influenza (commonly known as “the flu”) is a respiratory infection that is caused by a virus. People with influenza quickly become ill with a cough, fever, chills, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, and tiredness. Most people are sick for 2 to 7 days although the cough may last for weeks. In a few people, influenza can lead to pneumonia, hospitalization, and even death. Influenza spreads easily from infected people to others through coughing and sneezing. It can also be picked-up through direct contact with surfaces and objects, like unwashed hands and toys.

Pandemic H1N1 influenza is a new influenza strain that appeared in April 2009. It has since spread around the world. Pandemic H1N1 influenza can infect anyone, although people younger than 60 years of age are more likely to become infected than older individuals. Most people recover uneventfully but a few people can develop serious complications. Those at a somewhat increased risk of complications when they get infected are children less than 5 years of age, people with other medical problems, pregnant women and women who had a baby in the past four weeks, people who are overweight, residents of isolated or remote First Nations communities with limited access to health services and seniors.

Who should get the H1N1 influenza vaccine?

Pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccination is recommended for anyone six months of age and older who needs or wants protection against Pandemic H1N1 influenza infection. Certain people, who are at most risk for complications from Pandemic H1N1 infection, may be offered the Pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine first. There is another Pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine that is available for pregnant women which does not contain the adjuvant.

What about pregnant women?

All pregnant women with pre-existing health conditions and healthy pregnant women in the second half of their pregnancy should speak to their health care provider about receiving the adjuvanted vaccine. Healthy pregnant women in the first half of their pregnancy are at less risk of complications from the flu and can wait to receive the unadjuvanted vaccine, when it is available.

How many doses of the H1N1 influenza vaccine are needed?

Adults and adolescents need only one dose of the H1N1 influenza vaccine to be protected from the virus. Children between 6 months and 9 years of age require two doses of Arepanrix, given at least 21 days apart. The two doses help children make a good immune response.

Who should not get the H1N1 influenza vaccine?

The following persons should not get the H1N1 influenza vaccine:

- Infants under six months of age (the current vaccine is not recommended for this age group)
- Anyone with a serious allergy (anaphylaxis) to eggs or egg products.
- Anyone who has a severe allergy to any component of the vaccine.



- Anyone who had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose of the influenza vaccine.
- Anyone who has previously developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome within the first 8 weeks following an influenza immunization.
- People with bleeding disorders or who are taking medication that could effect blood clotting should discuss their medical situation with the nurse before receiving the vaccine.

What are the risks from H1N1 influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing side effects, which can be either mild, or occasionally, severe. The risk of the vaccine causing serious harm is extremely small.

Because the influenza vaccine does not contain live virus, you cannot get flu from the H1N1 vaccine. Minor side effects from both the H1N1 vaccines are expected to include: pain and swelling where the injection is given, tiredness, muscle and joint pain, and headaches. Children may have a mild fever, be tired and irritable and may not want to eat. As with the seasonal influenza vaccine, it is expected that most side effects will be mild, will not last long, and will go away on their own.

Arepanrix has not yet been widely used but it is expected to be like the seasonal influenza vaccine where:

- Life threatening allergic reactions are very rare
- An illness called Guillaine Barre Syndrome (GBS), which causes muscle paralysis, occurred after the influenza vaccine in 1976 and may occur very uncommonly after the seasonal influenza vaccine in some other influenza seasons. Overall the risk of GBS occurring in association with immunization is small. In comparison to the small risk of GBS, the risk of illness and death associated with getting the flu is much greater.
- During the 2000-2001 influenza season, a small number of people who received the seasonal influenza vaccine developed a side effect called Oculorespiratory Syndrome (ORS). ORS is described as the onset of red eyes and/or respiratory symptoms (cough, wheeze, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness or sore throat) and/or swelling of the face, occurring within 24 hours of influenza immunization.

When should I seek medical attention after immunization with the H1N1 influenza vaccine?

You should seek medical attention if you believe that you, or someone in your care, has had, or is someone in your care, has had, or is currently experiencing a reaction to the H1N1 vaccine.

Some general information about being vaccinated:

- Wearing a short sleeve shirt makes it easier for you to get your vaccine.
- You will be asked to wait in the clinic area for 15 minutes after the needle is given.
- Children from 6 months to 9 years of age will need to get 2 doses 21 days apart.
- The H1N1 vaccine will not prevent seasonal influenza so you will need to get your seasonal flu vaccine as well.