

## H1N1 Official Communication

October 21, 2009

# MYTH BUSTER: H1N1 Vaccine – Should I Take It?

We know that many employees are concerned about taking the H1N1 vaccine once it becomes available for health care workers. This document seeks to debunk the myths surrounding the vaccine:

**MYTH: H1N1 vaccine is not safe.**

**FACT: H1N1 vaccine is as safe as the seasonal vaccine.**

- The H1N1 vaccine is made *exactly* the same way as the seasonal influenza vaccine.
- Every year, preparation of the seasonal influenza vaccine is based on prediction by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on what “strains” of influenza we are most likely to see that year. CDC typically chooses two or three strains to include in a vaccine, and the decision is made early in the year to allow enough time for vaccine production.
- You’ll remember we first saw H1N1 in the United States in April 2009. Had that strain of influenza virus surfaced earlier in the year, H1N1 most likely would have been one of the influenza strains chosen for the routine seasonal vaccine. We then would have needed only one shot. ☺
- More than 100 million Americans take the flu vaccine annually with very few problems.

**MYTH: H1N1 vaccine is untested.**

**FACT: It was tested and received the FDA’s approval.**

- H1N1 vaccine has been given to thousands of volunteers without adverse effects.
- It was important to determine if the vaccine would stimulate the protective immune response. As expected, it did ... and the FDA approved it for release.

**MYTH: Pregnant woman should not get the H1N1 vaccine.**

**FACT: Pregnant women need to protect themselves by getting the H1N1 vaccine.**

The H1N1 vaccine is made *exactly* the same way as the seasonal influenza, *which pregnant women have been taking for years*. We know that pregnant women are having a hard time with the H1N1 flu because of over-stimulation of the immune system. Ten percent of the deaths from H1N1 are in pregnant women, a much higher statistic than for the typical seasonal influenza. Taking the vaccine is the BEST way to protect yourself throughout your pregnancy, and is highly recommended by the CDC. Pregnant women should avoid the flu-mist version of the vaccine, however.

No vaccine is without risk. With any influenza vaccine, it is not unusual to have some pain at the injection site, or even feel slight flu-like symptoms for a few days after injection. More serious risks include infection, allergic reaction and rarely Guillain-Barré syndrome.

As a health care worker, it is important to remember our responsibility to ourselves and our patients. We should do everything possible to come to work healthy and stay healthy to take care of our patients. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Infection Control or Employee Health Services.