

Influenza

Updated: October 21, 2009

Nova Scotia's 2009-10 Influenza Immunization Program Q&A

How will Nova Scotia's influenza immunization program work?

This year's immunization program will consist of H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccinations. H1N1 vaccine will be available for all Nova Scotians who want it. Seasonal flu vaccine will only be available for specific risk groups. For more information about our seasonal flu program, visit www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/flu.

When will the vaccinations be available?

The seasonal flu vaccine has been available for seniors and long-term care residents since Oct. 5, 2009. H1N1 vaccinations, as well as seasonal vaccinations for all other identified risk groups, will be available starting the week of October 26. For more information about the risk groups for seasonal flu, visit www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/flu.

What is the difference between the H1N1 vaccine and the seasonal influenza vaccine?

The H1N1 vaccine will protect against the H1N1 influenza virus. Seasonal influenza vaccine will protect against three strains of seasonal influenza that may circulate this season.

Should I get both vaccinations?

All Nova Scotians should get the H1N1 vaccine. Seasonal flu vaccine will be available for those in identified risk groups. For more information about the risk groups for seasonal flu, visit www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/flu

Why is it important to get vaccinated?

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, and those around you, from getting sick with the flu and what can be a serious illness. The danger of getting sick is much greater than a potential serious reaction to a vaccine.

Are these vaccines safe?

Yes. Careful research into the safety of any vaccine is done before it is used. Canada has very strict requirements for vaccines approved for use in Canada. Vaccines are safety-tested by the manufacturer and by Health Canada. Health Canada will review all available test results, including international data, to ensure the vaccine is safe and effective.

If I get vaccinated, is it still possible to get sick?

Yes. No influenza vaccine is 100 per cent effective. Because each individual is different, the majority of people who get vaccinated will develop strong immunity to the disease. Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself, and those around you, from getting sick. After you are vaccinated, you should continue to take the basic precautions – wash your hands frequently with soap and water; cough and sneeze into your arm or sleeve; do not share drinking glasses, water bottles, mouth guards, cosmetics or eating utensils; and stay home if you are sick.

Is it possible the vaccine could cause me to get the flu, either H1N1 or seasonal?

No. These vaccines do not contain live viruses and cannot cause you to get sick with the flu.

Do I have to pay for the vaccinations?

The H1N1 vaccine is free to all Nova Scotians who want it. The seasonal flu vaccine is free to those in identified risk groups. For more information about the seasonal flu risk groups, visit www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/flu.

Can I get both vaccines at the same time?

Yes. It is safe to get both vaccinations at the same time but they should be given in separate arms.

Where can I get my vaccinations?

Nova Scotians will get their vaccinations in three ways: community clinics, doctor's offices and private agencies (for example, your employer may contact a private agency to come to your workplace). District Health Authorities will be responsible for organizing vaccinations in communities across the province. For more information, contact your local District Health Authority or visit www.gov.ns.ca/h1n1.

It seems decisions and information are changing all of the time – it's so confusing. How do I know what to believe?

Information is being distributed by many sources, and we recognize that can be confusing for Nova Scotians. We're working hard with our District Health Authority partners and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to help you understand

H1N1 and give you the information you need in a timely way. Responding to a pandemic is complex and the information and science are evolving very quickly. We're making decisions based on the best information available and we will continue to adapt our strategy when necessary.

Please regularly visit www.gov.ns.ca/h1n1 to stay informed about H1N1 and Nova Scotia's 2009-10 influenza immunization program.

