

FLU

KNOW THE FACTS

... TALKING POINTS



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Although the number of new infections with 2009 H1N1 influenza has been decreasing, Arkansans are still at risk for H1N1 influenza infection. Therefore, it is important to increase the number of those vaccinated with 2009 influenza vaccine within the state. Though this has been an unprecedented year in terms of the number of people who have received flu vaccinations, many people still have not gotten the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine – this applies to every age and risk group.

The ADH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are reminding Arkansans that it's not too late to vaccinate for seasonal and 2009 H1N1 influenza. There is plenty of vaccine available at local health units in each county and at a large number of pharmacies and doctor's offices around the state. There will be no charge for the H1N1 flu vaccine at the local health units but please bring your insurance, Medicare, Medicaid and/or ARKids First cards with you if you have one. The cost for a seasonal flu shot at the local health units is \$20. At pharmacies and doctor's offices, there is a minimal charge for 2009 H1N1 and seasonal influenza vaccine.

Key groups who should get their vaccine include:

General Public and Healthcare Workers

There is plenty of 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine available through local health units, doctors' offices and private pharmacies statewide. Those at high risk for complications from the flu have had the opportunity to get vaccinated and people 6 months or older are encouraged to get the H1N1 influenza vaccine. Health care workers are among those at high risk of getting and spreading the flu to high risk patients, so it's important that health care or emergency medical services personnel that haven't received their 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine yet, get it now.

People with Chronic Health Conditions

People with chronic health conditions that put them at high risk of serious influenza-related complications need H1N1 vaccine. Those high risk conditions include asthma, diabetes, heart disease, kidney and liver disorders, neurological disorders, blood disorders, cancer, HIV or AIDS and others. The flu can make chronic health problems worse. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections are a few examples of flu-related complications.

People with high risk conditions, ages 25 through 64 years of age, have been hit especially hard by 2009 H1N1 influenza. A large majority of serious infections and deaths have occurred in this group. It's important that people who fall within this high risk group, or those with a high risk condition listed above, get vaccinated this year.

Pregnant Women, Children and Caregivers of Children Less than 6 Months Old

A 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccination is important for pregnant women, children and caregivers of children less than 6 months of age.

2009 H1N1 influenza is very serious for these three groups. A pregnant woman who gets flu has a greater chance for serious problems and even death from influenza. Vaccinating the mother during pregnancy can reduce the risk of influenza for her and for her baby.

Children of all ages are at increased risk of influenza illness, especially children under the age of 2. Children of any age who have chronic health conditions like asthma, neurological conditions, heart disease or diabetes are at increased risk for complications from flu. Getting the flu can cause children to miss school and activities, and sometimes result in hospitalization, or sadly, even death. From April through December 2009, 289 flu-related deaths in children have been reported to CDC.

Household contacts and caregivers of children 6 months and younger are *strongly* recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine because these children are not old enough to receive the vaccine and could become very sick if they get the flu. The best way to protect these children is to make sure that their caregivers and other adults and children who live with them get vaccinated.

Young Adults

The 2009 H1N1 influenza targets many of the same high risk groups as seasonal flu. However, unlike seasonal flu, the 2009 H1N1 influenza has also spread quickly among young adults, ages 19 to 24 years. Young adults have been hit extremely hard by 2009 H1N1 influenza this year. Since many young adults are regularly around a large variety of people, whether it's their families, workplace or classrooms, they are more likely to expose themselves and their loved ones to this virus. Vaccination is not only important for their health, but also for those around them.

Seniors

Older Americans are now recommended to receive the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine. While older people are thought to be less likely to be infected with this virus compared to young persons, there have been severe infections and deaths from 2009 H1N1 influenza in every age group, including people 65 and older.

Influenza is unpredictable and we do not know the likelihood of a future wave of 2009 H1N1 influenza, but we do know that vaccination is the single best way to reduce the health impact of influenza.