

## Frequently Asked Questions about the Novel H1N1 virus (Swine Flu)

### ❖ **What is 2009 H1N1 (swine flu)?**

2009 H1N1 (previously referred to as “swine flu”) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of 2009 H1N1 flu was underway.

### ❖ **Who is recommended to receive the H1N1 vaccine?**

- Pregnant women
- Household members and caretakers of children <6 months
- Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years of age
- Healthcare workers
- Adults 25-64 years of age with certain chronic health conditions that put them at increased risk of complications from flu. If you have a chronic health condition, please contact your primary care physician to find out if you qualify to receive the vaccine.

### ❖ **Why should persons older than 65 years of age not receive the vaccine?**

Current studies indicate the risk for infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups. Therefore, person over the age of 65 should not receive the vaccine until the needs of the recommended population have been met.

### ❖ **Is 2009 H1N1 virus contagious?**

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that 2009 H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human.

### ❖ **How does 2009 H1N1 virus spread?**

Spread of 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

### ❖ **What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?**

The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting. Severe illnesses and death has occurred as a result of illness associated with this virus.

❖ **Will the seasonal flu vaccine protect me from the H1N1?**

No. The seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the 2009 H1N1 flu.

❖ **When will the H1N1 vaccine be available?**

The New Mexico Department of Health is expecting to receive the first batch of vaccine in late October.

❖ **How can I prevent contracting the H1N1 virus?**

Take everyday actions to stay healthy.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.
- Stay home if you get sick. CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.
- Follow public health advice regarding school closures, avoiding crowds and other social distancing measures. These measures will continue to be important after a 2009 H1N1 vaccine is available because they can prevent the spread of other viruses that cause respiratory infections.

❖ **Does my Insurance cover the H1N1 vaccine?**

Most insurance companies will cover the H1N1 vaccine.

❖ **How is the H1N1 vaccine given?**

The H1N1 vaccine is injected into the muscle just as the seasonal flu vaccine. Children and adults over 10 years of age will receive one injection. Children from age 6 months to 9 years will require two injections given one month apart.

❖ **Will the vaccine contain the preservative thimerosal?**

Some H1N1 vaccines will contain thimerosal, a chemical preservative activists have linked to autism. However, there is no scientific basis for that claim. Manufacturers are also producing thimerosal-free doses. If you have concerns, ask your physician for a thimerosal-free vaccine.

❖ **If you had H1N1 during the outbreak last spring, should you get the new vaccine?**

No. If you had a confirmed diagnosis of H1N1, that infection should provide immunity.

❖ **What if my diagnosis of H1N1 was not confirmed?**

Consult your physician if you fall into one of the targeted groups but an H1N1 diagnosis was not previously confirmed.

❖ **Where can I get more information?**

Call the ABQ Health Partners Flu Shot Information Line at 505-262-7090.