



Seasonal Flu

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. The height of flu season occurs in winter, and the best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccination each year.

Seasonal flu vaccines are available through private providers now, and will continue through December, January and beyond.

Although anyone who wants one should go get a seasonal flu shot, the following groups have been identified as those that should be prioritized to receive the seasonal flu vaccination:

- ▶ Children aged 6 months—18 years
- ▶ All people over 50 years of age
- ▶ Pregnant and breastfeeding women
- ▶ Other adults at risk for medical complications from influenza.
- ▶ All people who live with or care for people at high risk for influenza-related complications, including contacts of children under 6 months.

Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Availability and Distribution -

- ▶ Both injectable and nasal vaccines are now available. The nasal spray vaccine is only for healthy people aged 2-49 years.
- ▶ Most vaccine recipients will receive their vaccine from a private provider, however, the DHH Office of Public Health will use a federal allotment to help ensure those with some high-risk conditions receive the vaccine at local parish health units.
- ▶ The seasonal flu vaccine requires one dose (shot) for most people. Children from 6 months—9 years require 2 doses, separated by 28 days.
- ▶ Although we encourage early flu shots, you can get your seasonal flu shot in January and still be protected during flu season in Louisiana.

H1N1

H1N1 is a new influenza virus first detected in April 2009. Its spread has continued throughout the summer of 2009, and the virus spreads in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread.

H1N1 flu vaccination has now begun in Louisiana, and will continue to expand over the next four months.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following priority groups should receive the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available:

- ▶ Pregnant women
- ▶ People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- ▶ Health care and emergency medical services personnel
- ▶ People from the ages of 6 months to 24 years
- ▶ People from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for flu complications because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

H1N1 Vaccine Availability and Distribution -

- ▶ H1N1 vaccine is available in both injectable and intranasal, and comes in both adult and pediatric formulations.
- ▶ Vaccine will be distributed over several months through a network of both private and public providers. Residents should stay in contact with their provider to determine the availability of vaccine, and should make an appointment to receive it when appropriate.
- ▶ The vaccine will be delivered from the federal government directly to provider sites that have pre-registered and trained to use the Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids Statewide (LINKS) system, as electronic reporting of administered doses is required.
- ▶ The H1N1 vaccine will require a single dose for persons over the age of 10, and two shots given to children under the age of 10, separated by at least 28 days.
- ▶ Once all high risk persons have been targeted, the campaign will open up to let anyone who wants a vaccine to get one.

The 2009 H1N1 vaccine is NOT intended to replace the seasonal flu vaccine. It is intended to be used alongside seasonal flu vaccine to protect people. Seasonal flu and the H1N1 vaccine may be administered on the same day if at least one of the doses is injectable, however, guidance recommends waiting three to four weeks between receiving the nasal version of both vaccines. The seasonal vaccine is available now to everyone. The 2009 H1N1 vaccine is currently available to select target groups, and will be available to all Louisianians by January.

To help prevent the spread of illness, you can also take the following everyday actions to stay healthy: Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you sneeze or cough, wash your hands often using soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth, and stay home if you are sick.