
FACTSHEET

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Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport
Ministry of Health Services

PROTECTING YOUR KIDS FROM THE H1N1 FLU VIRUS

In most children, the symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal influenza, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue and occasionally, vomiting and diarrhea.

Flu viruses spread from person to person mainly through droplets from the coughing or sneezing of a sick person. Flu viruses may also be spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with the virus and then touches his or her eyes, nose or mouth.

Should your child receive the vaccine?

All British Columbians who need and want the H1N1 vaccine are now eligible to receive the vaccine. For adults, one dose of the vaccine will be sufficient while children under 3 years old and those aged 3-9 years old with chronic conditions will need two doses.

People who choose to receive the H1N1 vaccine and for whom the seasonal flu vaccine is normally recommended will be able to receive both shots at the same time, if the seasonal vaccine is available in their area.

My child is under 6 months – which vaccine should he/she get?

The H1N1 vaccine is not recommended for any child under 6 months of age. The vaccine is not known to be effective in such children. Instead, their household members should be immunized.

My child is 6 months to 9 years old – how many doses should he/she get?

The Public Health Agency of Canada has updated its recommendations on H1N1 flu vaccine dosing for children between 3 years and 9 years of age. These recommendations apply to adjuvanted vaccine, which is the recommended vaccine for children under 10 years old.

The updated recommendations include three components:

- Children between 6 months of age and under 3 years of age should receive two half-doses of adjuvanted H1N1 flu vaccine, administered at least 21 days apart. Guidance for children in this age group is unchanged.
- Children with chronic health conditions who are 3 to 9 years of age should receive their first half-dose of the H1N1 flu vaccine as soon as possible. They should also receive a second half-dose of the H1N1 flu vaccine. The interval between the two half-doses should be a minimum of 21 days. Guidance for children in this group is unchanged.
- Healthy children between 3 and 9 years of age should only receive a single half-dose of the H1N1 vaccine, and do not need to return for a second vaccine for now. This is a new recommendation and may be further updated as more information becomes available.

These updated recommendations reflect findings from clinical trial results from Europe that show a single half-dose of adjuvanted H1N1 flu vaccine for healthy children provides an acceptable level of protection from infection from the H1N1 flu virus.

Further adjustments to the vaccine dosage recommendations may be made once the results of additional research and clinical trials on vaccine effectiveness are available.

Will taking only one half-dose of pandemic H1N1 vaccine mean that children might be protected for a shorter time than if they take two half-doses?

There is currently no data on the duration of immunity following immunization and we will need to wait for results of further research. This is why we are monitoring it closely and if there is an indication that immunity wanes quickly after a single half-dose, a recommendation for a second half-dose will be reconsidered.

My child is between 10 and 18 years (inclusive) – which vaccine should he/she get?

Any healthy child aged 10 to 18 years (inclusive) is now eligible and recommended to receive one full dose of either H1N1 vaccine. For children in this age range with chronic medical conditions, the adjuvanted H1N1 vaccine is preferable.

What other precautions can I take?

Additional precautions such as hand washing and personal hygiene should be encouraged to prevent infecting young babies with influenza.

In addition to receiving the vaccine, there are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like the H1N1 flu virus:

- Teach your children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to cough and sneeze into a tissue or into the inside of their elbow. Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Teach your children to stay at least two metres (six feet) away from people who are sick.
- Children who are sick should stay home from school and daycare and stay away from other people until they are better.

You can call [HealthLink BC](#) at 8-1-1, 24 hours a day/seven days a week to speak to a nurse if you have more questions or are concerned about any illness/symptoms you're experiencing.

To find out where to get your H1N1 flu vaccine, use the Flu Clinic Locator at www.immunizebc.ca. For the latest facts on the H1N1 flu virus, visit www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1.

