

## H1N1 Flu and You

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### Vaccination information for Seasonal and H1N1 Influenza

*by Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, State Health Officer and Director, KDHE Division of Health*



**T**he Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) will be providing periodic updates and information to be shared with all state employees regarding the H1N1 Pandemic Influenza issue over the coming months. And, despite all of the news about H1N1 flu, it is still important for people – especially the elderly

and other high-risk groups – to receive the seasonal flu vaccine, which will be available much earlier this year. Today's information deals with the question of early vaccination for seasonal flu and the vaccination process related to H1N1 Influenza A.

Does getting vaccinated against flu early in the season pose a risk that immunity may wane before the end of the season?

Flu vaccination provides protection against the influenza strains contained in the vaccine through one influenza season. Vaccination can begin as soon as vaccine is available later this month or in September. The goal for individuals, especially those at high risk of developing complications from influenza, is to receive a seasonal flu vaccination before influenza activity is taking place in the community. In Kansas, there is ongoing influenza activity at this time, so the sooner individuals receive their seasonal flu vaccination, the better. Regardless of how early individuals receive their seasonal flu vaccination, they will have protection from seasonal flu throughout the duration of the flu season.

Because there will be no state-sponsored vaccination clinics for state employees this year, it is recommended that individuals contact their private healthcare providers or participate in a community-based clinic to obtain a

seasonal flu vaccination.

Will the seasonal flu vaccination protect me from the H1N1 Influenza A Pandemic strain of flu?

Because the H1N1 Influenza A Pandemic strain of flu has never been seen before, the seasonal flu vaccination will not provide protection against it. Therefore, individuals will need to obtain separate vaccinations for H1N1 in order to be fully protected this flu season. At this time, clinical trials for H1N1 vaccine are underway with plans for the vaccine to be available in Kansas sometime in October, or possibly sooner. Initially, the vaccine will be made available to individuals in the following federally-identified priority groups:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers of infants younger than 6 months of age
- All children and young adults ages 6 months through 24 years
- Healthcare personnel
- People aged 25-64 years with high-risk medical conditions

Once an adequate supply of H1N1 vaccine is on hand, it will be made available to all Kansans. It's likely that a two-dose series of H1N1 vaccine administered at least 21 days apart will be required in order for individuals to be fully protected. It is anticipated that seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day. However, it is expected that the seasonal vaccine will be available earlier than the H1N1 vaccine. More information about when and where H1N1 vaccine will be available will be forthcoming.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Eberhart-Phillips MD".

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