

Fact Sheet: Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza vaccine program

1) When will the pandemic influenza vaccine be available?

- The national pandemic influenza vaccination program will commence on Wednesday 30 September for all Australians aged 10 years and older.¹
- The access and availability of the pandemic influenza vaccine is being managed by the State and Territory Governments. When you are able to receive the vaccine will depend on where you live.¹
- For more information about the availability of the pandemic influenza vaccine contact the Pandemic Flu hotline on 1802007 or visit the website www.healthemergency.gov.au

2) Who should be vaccinated against pandemic influenza?

- Influenza vaccines are one of the most effective ways to protect yourself and those around you from contracting illness during influenza epidemics and pandemics.² Anyone who wishes to protect themselves should speak with their GP about vaccination.
- The following groups have been identified by the Government as priorities to receive the pandemic influenza vaccine:¹
 - People with underlying chronic medical conditions such as **diabetes**, asthma, cancers, HIV, heart disease, and chronic kidney failure.
 - People who are obese with a BMI over 35
 - Indigenous people and remote and isolated communities with indigenous people
 - Children in special schools, initially only 10 years and over until child safety data is available
 - Pregnant women
 - Parents and guardians of children aged 0-6 months
 - Front line health care and community care workers who have direct contact with patients
- The pandemic vaccine for children 9 years and under is not yet available; however it is expected that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) will be making a decision on use of the pandemic vaccine in children in October (once clinical trial results for this age group are available).³

3) How do you get the pandemic influenza vaccine and how much will it cost?

- How you receive your pandemic influenza vaccine may depend on where you live. In most instances it is likely it will be available from your GP and will require one injection to provide immunity.^{3,4}
- As a priority group, people with **diabetes** should speak with their GP now to organise an appointment.
- The pandemic influenza vaccine is provided free, however a consultation fee from the GP or healthcare provider may be charged.⁴

4) Is the pandemic vaccine safe?

- Licensed vaccines, including influenza vaccines, are held to a very high standard of safety. The safety of the pandemic influenza vaccine has been evaluated and approved for use in Australia by the Australian Government.^{1,2}
- Results of an Australian study have shown the safety of pandemic influenza vaccine in adults is comparable to seasonal influenza vaccines.⁴
- The pandemic influenza vaccine is made using the same manufacturing process as for seasonal vaccines which have an extensive body of safety data.⁴
- The vaccine safety will continue to be carefully monitored following the national vaccination program.

5) How is the pandemic vaccine different from the seasonal influenza vaccine?

- The key difference between normal seasonal influenza vaccine and the pandemic influenza vaccine is that the 2009 seasonal vaccines was formulated to protect against three strains of influenza circulating before the pandemic emerged. The pandemic influenza vaccine is formulated to protect specifically against the new virus strain.
- The strain contained in the pandemic vaccine is the A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) virus. This strain has been recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the strain responsible for the circulating pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza.⁵
- The seasonal influenza vaccine is produced every year with an updated formulation. It protects people against three strains of influenza which the WHO identifies as the most likely to cause outbreaks for that season.
- The current 2009 seasonal influenza vaccine contains the following three influenza strains:⁶
 - A/(H1N1): an A/Brisbane/59/2007
 - A/(H3N2): an A/Brisbane/10/2007
 - B/Florida/4/2006

References

1. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. TGA Green Lights Pandemic Flu Vaccine. 18 September 2009. Available at: www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/news-180909
2. World Health Organisation. *Vaccines for pandemic influenza A (H1N1)*. 12 July 2009. Available at: www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/vaccine_preparedness/en/index.html
3. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. Vaccine to protect against Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza a step closer 20 August 2009. Available at www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/health-swine_influenza-index.htm
4. CSL Biotherapies. Media Release: CSL demonstrates robust immune response from single (15mg) dose of monovalent pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza A vaccine in healthy adults. 11 September 2009.
5. World Health Organisation. What is the new influenza A H1N1?. 11 June 2009. Available at: www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/frequently_asked_questions/about_disease/en/index.html
6. World Health Organization. *Recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2009 southern hemisphere influenza season*. 2008. Available at: www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/recommendations2009south/en/index.html

Last Updated: September 2009