



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
MENTAL HYGIENE

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

Questions and Answers about Nasal-Spray Influenza Vaccines

This letter addresses some questions about the nasal-spray formulation of the H1N1 vaccine, which is being used as part of New York City's school vaccination program.

What is the nasal-spray H1N1 vaccine?

The nasal-spray vaccine is made of a weakened strain of the H1N1 virus. The weakened vaccine strain has been made so that it does not cause flu or spread disease to others. It was developed to provide an alternative to injection for healthy people who want to protect themselves or their close contacts from influenza.

Is the nasal-spray H1N1 vaccine safe?

The nasal-spray H1N1 vaccine is made in exactly the same way as the nasal-spray seasonal influenza vaccine, which has been used safely for the past six years. Some people may experience runny nose or headache after getting the vaccine, but those symptoms are typically mild and transient.

Who can get the nasal-spray H1N1 vaccine?

The nasal-spray vaccine is recommended for healthy individuals between 2 years and 49 years of age.

Who should *not* receive the nasal-spray H1N1 vaccine, and why not?

Out of an abundance of caution, the nasal spray vaccine is recommended only for groups in which it has been tested for safety. The following groups of people should not receive the nasal-spray vaccine until further studies have been conducted:

- People with medical conditions that increase the risk of severe illness or complications from influenza*
- Children 2 through 4 years old who have experienced wheezing in the past year
- Pregnant women
- People with a history of severe allergy to chicken eggs, or to a previous dose of influenza vaccine

**These include asthma, diabetes, chronic heart and lung conditions, kidney failure, a weakened immune system, or (for adolescents) long-term aspirin therapy.*

Can a person who gets the nasal-spray vaccine transmit the weakened H1N1 virus to people with medical problems (such as asthma), causing them to get sick?

No, the nasal-spray vaccine is a weakened virus and does not spread illness. While sensitive tests have shown that it is rare for the weakened virus from the vaccine to spread to another person, it has not been shown to cause illness. The nasal-spray vaccine can safely be given to household members and other close contacts of people at risk of influenza complications, including pregnant women and people with asthma.

November 6, 2009