



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND
MENTAL HYGIENE**

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H1N1 Vaccination in New York City Schools: What Parents Need to Know

What is the H1N1 vaccine?

There are two types of H1N1 vaccine – an injection (shot) and a nasal spray. The injection is made from killed parts of the H1N1 virus, the nasal spray from live but weakened virus. In response to the vaccine, your body develops immunity to the H1N1 virus, protecting you against infection. It takes about two weeks to develop immunity.

Which vaccine is best for my child?

The H1N1 influenza injection is approved for use in people 6 months of age and older, including healthy people, pregnant women, and those with chronic medical conditions. The nasal-spray vaccine is approved for use in healthy people between the ages of 2 and 49 who are not pregnant. The nurse administering the vaccine will determine which is appropriate for your child based on the answers you provide to the questions on the screening and consent form.

Can I choose whether my child receives the injection or spray form of the vaccine?

No, this depends on the child's age and medical history, and on the availability of vaccine.

If a child has asthma, can he or she get the nasal spray?

No, a child with asthma should receive the injection.

Where else can my child receive the H1N1 vaccine?

Pediatricians and primary-care doctors will offer the H1N1 vaccine. Check to see if your child's regular health care provider has the vaccine. If you don't have a regular doctor, you can call 311 or go to nyc.gov/flu. As the vaccine supply increases, public clinics and commercial pharmacies will also offer H1N1 vaccine.

Is the H1N1 vaccine safe? Has it been adequately tested?

Yes. The H1N1 vaccine is produced in exactly the same way that seasonal influenza vaccines are produced every year, and it has been tested in clinical trials. The only difference is that this vaccine helps the immune system recognize and combat the H1N1 virus. Like any medical product, influenza vaccines can cause mild side effects, but serious reactions are exceedingly rare. By contrast, influenza and its complications kill 36,000 Americans annually –approximately 1,100 in New York City alone.

Is there preservative, or mercury, in the vaccine?

Vaccine in multi-dose vials contains thimerosal, a preservative. Single-dose vials and nasal-spray do not contain thimerosal.

Is thimerosal dangerous to my child?

The claim that thimerosal increases the risk of autism has been discredited. In 2004, an expert panel convened by the Institute of Medicine reviewed many studies looking into

this theory and found no association between autism and thimerosal. Subsequent studies have reached the same conclusion.

What are the common side effects of influenza vaccines?

Serious adverse reactions are extremely rare. If a vaccine causes side effects, they usually start soon after the vaccination and last a day or two.

Minor side effects from the **injection** include:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the injection was given
- Fever
- Aches
- Nausea

Minor side effects from the **nasal spray** may include:

- Stuffed or runny nose
- Aches
- Fever

What are the signs of a serious allergic reaction to an influenza vaccine?

- Difficulty breathing
- Hoarseness or wheezing
- Swelling around the eyes or lips
- Hives
- Paleness or weakness
- Rapid heartbeat or dizziness

How should I handle a severe reaction to influenza vaccine?

If a person is experiencing significant side effects, call a doctor right away. Write down what happened and the date and time it happened. Ask the doctor, nurse or health department to file a Vaccine Adverse Event Report form. The form is available at vaers.hhs.gov or calling 800-822-7967, or 212-676-2288. *If the person is severely ill, call 911 immediately.*

Who should *not* get an influenza vaccine?

- Anyone who has a serious allergy to eggs
- Anyone who has had a serious allergic reaction or other problem after receiving an influenza vaccine in the past
- Anyone with an acute illness, such as a cold or fever (the person can be vaccinated after he or she feels better).
- If your child ever has ever experienced Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS).

How many doses are required?

Children 9 years old and under will need two doses of the H1N1 vaccine, about four weeks apart, to get full protection.

How will the City deliver H1N1 vaccine to school children?

The City of New York will offer H1N1 injections and nasal spray in elementary schools starting in late October and early November. This school-based vaccination program will last about eight weeks. In addition, the City will hold weekend vaccination clinics for middle-school and upper-school students in all five boroughs. These weekend clinics will

be held on approximately five weekends during November and December. The clinics' times and locations will be available through nyc.gov/flu or 311 when they are scheduled.

Which schools will offer H1N1 vaccinations?

All public elementary schools and District 75 schools are participating, and non-public schools have the option to participate. Each non-public school administration will decide whether to offer the vaccine.

Do I have to get my child vaccinated against H1N1 influenza?

The decision is voluntary, but the Health Department strongly encourages all parents to get their children immunized against H1N1 and seasonal influenza. No child will be vaccinated without the consent of a parent or guardian.

How will you obtain parental consent for vaccination?

Consent forms will be posted online at nyc.gov/flu, and paper copies will be sent home with students. Parents can fill them out and send them back to the school with their children. Consent forms will also be available on site at the weekend vaccination clinics for middle-school and high-school students.

When are the consent forms due back for elementary school students?

For schools with fewer than 400 students, consent forms are due back by October 23. For all other schools, consents are due back by October 30.

How will I know if my child received the vaccine?

A confirmation letter will be sent home with each child who is vaccinated.

Can I know ahead of time when school vaccinations will take place so that I can be with my child?

Vaccinations will take place during an eight-week period from late-October through December. For scheduling information, please contact your child's school. Parents who want to accompany their children should arrange to have them vaccinated by their health care providers or take them to the City's weekend vaccination clinics.

What if my child is absent when the school offers H1N1 vaccine?

If your child misses the H1N1 vaccine in school, call your child's doctor or take your child to one of the weekend vaccine clinics that will be held during November to December.

I signed my child's consent form, but the child has since been vaccinated elsewhere. What should I do?

Call the school to inform the nurse that the child no longer needs to receive the vaccine at school. Repeated vaccination is not harmful, but it provides no additional benefit.

My child lost the consent form, how can I get another one?

Please contact your child's school to obtain another consent form. Or you can download a consent form at nyc.gov/flu and print a copy yourself.

Is there anything I should do after my child is vaccinated?

Please give your child's health care provider a copy of the form your child receives after he or she is vaccinated.

Will the City provide both seasonal and H1N1 vaccines in schools?

Only the H1N1 vaccine will be offered in schools. Children should receive seasonal vaccine from their health care providers. Seasonal vaccine is also available from public clinics and commercial pharmacies. For locations, visit nyc.gov/flu.

If my child gets a seasonal influenza vaccine, does he or she also need the H1N1 vaccine?

Yes, the child should receive both. The seasonal influenza vaccine does not protect against the H1N1 virus.

Do I need to get my child vaccinated against seasonal influenza?

Influenza vaccination is the best way to protect your child and others from influenza. The New York City Health Department urges all children six months to 19 years old to get vaccinated against seasonal influenza. The vaccine is safe and effective against the most common strains of influenza. Families that lack health care coverage can get free or low-cost vaccine from public clinics and other sites throughout the city. For information on where to get children vaccinated, call 311 or visit nyc.gov/flu.

Will there be enough H1N1 vaccine for everyone who needs it?

Yes, deliveries will continue until all of New York City's needs have been met.

Do I have to pay for the H1N1 vaccine?

There are no out-of-pocket costs for parents who have their children vaccinated in schools or City-sponsored weekend clinics. Government agencies are supplying health care providers with H1N1 vaccine at no cost, but some providers may charge an administration fee. As vaccine supply increases, children without health insurance will be able to receive the vaccine at low cost or no cost at public clinics located in every borough.

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