



Facts about..

SWINE FLU VACCINATION

WHAT IS SWINE FLU?

Swine Influenza, also called H1N1 Influenza is a new strain of Influenza A that has been circulating around the world since April 2009. The virus causes mild respiratory illness in most, but can be severe in some.

The swine flu vaccination, also known as Panvax H1N1 vaccine, has been manufactured using the same processes as for seasonal influenza vaccine.

Panvax H1N1 vaccine has been formulated into multi-dose vials containing the preservative thiomersal.

Multi-dose vials have been used to ensure the vaccine was available for use in Australia in the shortest possible time.

The vaccination is safe as it meets the rigorous requirements for registration by Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration.

IF I HAVE HAD SWINE FLU, DO I STILL NEED TO BE VACCINATED?

If you have definitely had pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza it is likely you have immunity and do not need the Panvax H1N1 vaccine. But, you can only know for certain if you had this pandemic flu if you were tested for it and the laboratory test was positive. If you have had a flu, but were not tested, you should get the vaccination to ensure that you have good protection against the pandemic H1N1 virus. It is safe to have the Panvax H1N1 vaccine, even if you are already immune to the virus, just as it is safe to get a seasonal influenza vaccination if you've already had seasonal flu.

People who have had pandemic influenza and were treated with antiviral medicines like Tamiflu are less likely to develop protective immunity following the infection. It is important that you get vaccinated.

HOW LONG DOES THE VACCINE TAKE TO WORK?

Protection after vaccination varies from person to person, but generally it takes about 2 weeks. Protection is expected to last for at least one year.

CAN I STILL GET A SEASONAL FLU VACCINE AFTER BEING VACCINATED FOR SWINE INFLUENZA?

Yes, and it is particularly important to do so if you are travelling overseas. Panvax H1N1 vaccine only protects you against the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza virus. You can still be infected by seasonal influenza viruses circulating in the community. To reduce your risk of influenza during Australia's winter months you should get the seasonal flu vaccine next year, particularly if you are in a high risk seasonal flu group.

IF YOU ARE PREGNANT

Influenza vaccines are safe during all stages of pregnancy. As a pregnant woman you are at risk of severe complications if you catch the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza, so vaccination is strongly recommended.

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THE VACCINATION CONTAINS THIOMERSAL.

IS THIOMERSAL SAFE?

There is no evidence that thiomersal is harmful to pregnant women or their babies. Thiomersal is a commonly used preservative in multi-dose medicines such as Panvax H1N1 vaccine, which contains a small amount of thiomersal to keep it safe in the vials. Thiomersal is an antibacterial and anti fungal, meaning it stops bacteria and fungi growing in a medicine and has been used in many medical products and vaccines for more than 60 years.

There is no evidence that thiomersal in vaccines has caused any developmental or neurological abnormalities, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism or any other health problem.

WHO SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN THE VACCINE?

People should not be given the vaccine or any other influenza vaccines if they:

- Have had anaphylaxis, a severe form of a generalised allergic reaction, following a previous dose of any influenza

- Have experienced anaphylaxis following receipt of any vaccine component, including neomycin or polymyxin antibiotics.
- Have a severe allergy to eggs, including people who have experienced swelling of the lips or tongue, or had acute breathing problems or convulsions, after eating eggs. People with milder forms of egg allergy may be able to be vaccinated and should talk to their doctor about the vaccine.
- People who are moderately or severely ill with a fever should usually wait until they recover before getting the vaccine.
- Acute breathing problems or convulsions, after eating eggs.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SIDE-EFFECTS OF THE VACCINE?

It is common (around one in ten people) with influenza vaccines to have some swelling, redness and/or pain at the injection site. Other symptoms such as fever, tiredness, headaches and muscle aches are less common. These side-effects can start within a few hours of vaccination and may last for one to two days.

Allergic reactions are uncommon

after vaccination, but can be severe in some people. These reactions are due to an allergy to ingredients listed earlier. Some allergic reactions can happen within 15 minutes of vaccination, so it is important that you wait at the Practice for this time so that you can be observed.

WHAT DO I DO IF I FEEL UNWELL OR EXPERIENCE A SIDE-EFFECT AFTER THE VACCINE?

If you have pain at the injection site you can take paracetamol or apply a cold compress to ease the discomfort.

If you have a fever after vaccination you should drink extra fluids and rest. Paracetamol can also be used to reduce fever. If the fever persists, or you are worried about any reaction you are experiencing, contact the Practice as soon as possible, or go to a hospital.

THE VACCINATION IS AVAILABLE IN CLINIC TIMES. PLEASE SEE OUR WEBSITE FOR DATES AND TIMES

SOURCE: Dept. Of Health & Ageing