

**HEALTHCARE
WORKERS**



**IT
STOPS
WITH
YOU**



Getting the Swine Flu vaccine
will protect you from Swine Flu
and will also stop it spreading
to people around you.



Féidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Department of
Health & Children
AN ROINN SLÁINTE AGUS LEANAÍ

Getting the Swine Flu vaccine means you won't get Swine Flu. It also means you won't pass it to your patients and your family. Every vaccinated person helps to stop this flu from spreading.

What is Pandemic H1N1 or Swine Flu?

Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 or Swine Flu is a new form of flu that, for most people, has caused mild to moderate illness. However, some people have had a more severe illness and some have died – including younger children, pregnant women, people with long-term illnesses and previously healthy adults. Most people under 65 have no immunity to Swine Flu so, over the coming months, the HSE will offer a vaccine against Swine Flu to everyone living in Ireland.

If it's a mostly mild illness, why vaccinate so many people?

First of all, it's a mild illness for most people, but not for everyone. Getting the vaccine protects you, but it also protects the people around you too, like your family or children, your patients, or someone close to you who is not in full health. The more people that get the vaccine, the less flu gets passed around. If you are vaccinated, Swine Flu **stops with you**.

As a healthcare worker you are one of the first to get the vaccine because:

- you are more likely to come into contact with people who have flu
- you can easily pass pandemic flu to vulnerable patients before you even realise you are ill
- you can easily bring the infection home to your family before you realise you are ill

How long does it take the vaccine to work?

The vaccine starts to work within two weeks – our current advice is that for you to be fully protected from Swine Flu, you need a second dose of vaccine three weeks after the first dose. It is hoped that more information will emerge soon confirming that one dose of vaccine will be enough to protect people aged 13 years and over.



How safe is the Swine Flu vaccine?

Both Swine Flu vaccines used in Ireland have been licensed by European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the Irish Medicines Board. The side effects from the vaccine are expected to be mild and like those from seasonal flu vaccines, which have been used for more than 60 years. Serious side effects are expected to be very rare. The Swine Flu vaccine contains killed virus and therefore cannot cause influenza.

What is Thiomersal and is it safe?

Thiomersal is a mercury-containing compound that has been used since the 1930s to prevent contamination in some vaccines and yes, it is safe. Thiomersal is **not** the same as methyl mercury, which can accumulate in the body and become toxic. Thiomersal contains a different form of mercury (ethyl mercury) which is metabolized and removed from the body much faster than methyl mercury.

What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS)?

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is a nerve condition that can result in temporary paralysis and was seen in some people who received another type of Swine Flu vaccine in 1976. Studies have shown since then that GBS may occur very rarely with flu vaccinations – about one case for every million people vaccinated. More recent studies have shown us that the risk of getting GBS as a result of having the flu itself is actually much greater. There is also evidence that the vaccine protects against GBS.

Is it safe for pregnant women to be vaccinated?

Yes. The vaccine is safe to use in pregnancy and is recommended for all women from 14 weeks pregnant to 6 weeks after giving birth. Pregnant healthcare workers and pregnant women with long term health conditions should get the vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. This is because they are at higher risk of exposure or complications from Pandemic (H1N1) 2009.

Is there anyone who cannot get Swine Flu vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to children under 6 months of age, and should be postponed if you have a temperature over 38°C. Everyone in the at-risk groups aged over 6 months and under 65 years should get the vaccine. If you have a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome or a severe allergy to eggs or other substances in the vaccine please discuss this with your GP or occupational health department.

IT STOPS WITH YOU



What can I expect after vaccination?

The most common side effects will be mild and may include soreness, redness or swelling where the injection was given. Headache, fever, aches and tiredness may occur. Some people may have mild sweating and shivering as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not Swine Flu and will pass after a day or so.

What if I don't feel well after vaccination?

Take paracetamol or ibuprofen if you have a fever or any pain where the injection was given. If you are pregnant, take paracetamol for fever, not ibuprofen or aspirin. Avoid clothes rubbing against the injection area and drink plenty of fluids. Remember if you are unwell after getting a vaccine, you could be sick for some other reason – don't assume it's the flu vaccine and take medical advice if needed.

Do I have to pay for the vaccine?

The vaccine and its administration are free of charge for everyone.

Talk to your Occupational Health Dept or your line manager and get the Swine Flu Vaccine now.

Where can I get more information?

Visit www.swineflu.ie or call **1800 94 11 00**