

## Frequently Asked Questions H1N1 Flu Shots for State Employees

**Q1. When will H1N1 flu shots be available?**

A1. H1N1 flu vaccine will be available for the general public sometime in December of this year.

**Q2. Who should get an H1N1 flu shot?**

A2. According to the Virginia Department of Health, current evidence indicates that relatively few cases of novel H1N1 have occurred among older persons. The highest hospitalization rates for illness caused by novel H1N1 have been among individuals less than 25 years old. Pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions have an increased risk of developing complications from the novel H1N1 influenza virus.

**Q3. How effective will the vaccine be?**

A3. The Virginia Department of Health indicates that the **seasonal** flu vaccine is effective against circulating strains of seasonal flu and prevents illness in about 70-90 percent of healthy persons younger than 65. The vaccine is less effective in people older than 65 because their immune system tends to be weaker. However, people older than 65 still benefit from a seasonal flu vaccination since it decreases the likelihood that they will develop a severe or fatal flu infection. Regular updates on seasonal and H1N1 flu vaccines are available on the VDH Web site at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov) or at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu>.

**Q4. What will it cost to get an H1N1 flu shot?**

A4. The federal government is picking up the cost of the vaccine and supplies. While the vaccine is free, some providers may charge an administrative fee. Your state health plan will cover up to \$20 of the administrative fee if the vaccine is administered by a provider who participates in the plan or participates in the plan's pharmacy flu shot program. For a list of sites that are not charging an administrative fee, visit the Virginia Department of Health Web site at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov).

**Q5. Will my seasonal flu shot still be covered by my health plan?**

A5. Yes. The Key Advantage and TLC HDHP health plans will pay the full cost of seasonal flu shots provided at a doctor's office or pharmacy participating in the state free flu shot program. Your employer may also be holding an onsite flu shot clinic onsite. Kaiser Permanente HMO members may get a free flu shot at a doctor's office or participating medical center.

**Q6. Where to I go to get an H1N1 flu shot?**

A6. For a list of H1N1 flu shot sites, visit the Virginia Department of Health Web site at [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov).

**Q7. How can I be sure that the H1N1 flu shot is free?**

A7. H1N1 flu shots are given at no charge at public vaccination sites. Another way to be sure the shot is free is to go to a provider who participates in the state health benefits free flu shot program. At a participating provider, you will not be responsible for any administrative fee that may be charged in addition to the free flu shot. If you go to a non-participating provider, you may be responsible for the administrative fee.

**Q8. Are there any special requirements for children under age 6?**

A8. No. According to the Virginia Department of Health, the development process for the novel H1N1 vaccine is very similar to that of the seasonal flu vaccine, which has been proven safe for use in children. Studies regarding the safety of the novel H1N1 vaccine in healthy adults, healthy children, and pregnant women are currently underway and initial indications are that this vaccine is well tolerated.

**Q9. Should I take an antiviral drug like Tamiflu as a precaution?**

A9. Influenza antiviral drugs like Tamiflu decrease the ability of flu viruses to reproduce. According to the Virginia Department of Health, antiviral drugs are recommended to treat people who are very sick, hospitalized or who are sick with flu-like symptoms and at increased risk of serious flu complications. These people would include pregnant women, young children and those with chronic health conditions. Antiviral drugs are discouraged for prevention of illness in healthy individuals.

**Q10. How can I protect myself from the H1N1 flu virus at work?**

A10. There are several precautions you can take:

- Stay home if you are sick, get plenty of rest, and check with your doctor's office.
- Keep your immune system strong by getting plenty of sleep, being physically active, managing your stress, drinking plenty of fluids and eating nutritious food.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or hand sanitizer.
- Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough, and throw it away.
- Avoid touching your nose, eyes or mouth in order to keep germs out of your system.

**Q11. What should I do if I get the H1N1 flu?**

A11. If you have flu-like symptoms, the Centers for Disease Control suggests:

- Stay home and avoid contact with other people. It is recommended that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities.
- Do not leave your home except to get medical care. Avoid normal activities, such as work, travel or public gatherings.
- Stay away from others as much as possible to keep them from getting sick.
- If you have severe illness or you are at high risk for flu complications, contact your health care provider or seek medical care.

**Q12. Do children need a prescription to get the H1N1 flu shot?**

A12. Each pharmacy has its own protocol on giving children the H1N1 flu shot. However, depending on the pharmacy, the pharmacist can call the doctor for a prescription. Parents should call ahead to find out if the pharmacy will dispense a flu shot to children and to inquire if the pharmacy has an age limit.