



## **School-based 2009 H1N1 Influenza (flu) Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions – Parents/Guardians**

### **1) Why are school children being offered free 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?**

The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) believes this important service will benefit the health of Hawai'i's school children, families, and communities. Consider the following:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that school children receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine when it first becomes available.
- To date, the largest number of confirmed 2009 H1N1 influenza cases have occurred in school children.
- 2009 H1N1 influenza has caused numerous outbreaks in schools over the past several months.

### **2) Who can receive the free 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine at school?**

Students attending kindergarten through the eighth grade are eligible to receive the free 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine at participating schools. Teachers, administrators, and other school staff may also receive the vaccine. Hawai'i schools that participated in the seasonal flu vaccination program have been given the opportunity to participate.

### **3) Can home schooled students receive the free 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?**

No. The 2009 H1N1 influenza school-based vaccination program is available to kindergarten through eighth grade students attending participating schools. The health of home schooled children is very important, and parents of home schooled children are encouraged to access 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccinations through their child's regular healthcare provider.

### **4) When will the vaccine be given?**

School-based 2009 H1N1 flu vaccinations will begin in mid-November 2009. Each school will have its own clinic date and time. Your child's school will notify you of the specific clinic date.

### **5) What do I have to do for my child to get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine at school?**

Participating is easy! Just read the Vaccine Information Statements, choose the type of flu vaccine (Nasal Spray or Shot) that you want your child to receive, and complete, sign, and return the appropriate consent form to your child's school.

### **6) What if my child is absent when vaccinations are offered?**

If your child misses the scheduled 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination clinic at school, you can call your child's regular healthcare provider to schedule a vaccination appointment. Make-up clinic dates will not be scheduled.

### **7) Can my younger or older children and I be vaccinated at the school, too?**

No, only children in kindergarten through the eighth grade are eligible for the free 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine at school. Parents, guardians, and older or younger children may receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine from their regular healthcare provider or clinic.

**8) Are 2009 H1N1 flu illnesses serious?**

Yes, they can be. All people, no matter how healthy, are at some risk of developing severe and even fatal flu infections.

**9) Are healthy children at risk of serious 2009 H1N1 flu illness?**

Yes. The 2009 H1N1 influenza virus has caused mild to severe illness, including hospitalizations and deaths. Many children have been infected with the 2009 H1N1 virus, and there have been large outbreaks in schools across the country.

**10) Should healthy school children receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?**

Yes. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination for **ALL** school age children. This recommendation should reduce the risk of 2009 H1N1 flu among children, their need for doctors' visits, and missed time from school. Also, decreasing the spread of 2009 H1N1 flu among children may reduce flu among their household members and within the community.

**11) Who will give the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine to my child(ren)?**

Trained DOH appointed personnel will administer the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.

**12) Is my child required to be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 flu?**

No. Participation in the school-based program is voluntary, and your permission is required. However, remember that it is recommended that all school age children should be vaccinated against the H1N1 flu.

**13) My child doesn't like needles or shots. Is there another way to get vaccinated?**

Yes. Besides the 2009 H1N1 flu shot, the nasal spray 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine will be offered.

**14) Is DOH getting assistance from other organizations to help make the school 2009 H1N1 flu vaccination project a success?**

Yes. Many other agencies are helping DOH in organizing, applying, and evaluating the school flu vaccination project including:

- Hawai'i Department of Education
- Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools,
- Hawai'i Catholic Schools
- Hawai'i's schools of nursing at Hawai'i Pacific University and the University of Hawai'i
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Others have endorsed the program as a positive contribution to community health including the Hawai'i Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

**15) Will the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine be made differently than the seasonal influenza vaccine?**

No. The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is made using the same processes and facilities that are used to make the currently licensed seasonal influenza vaccines. It is expected that the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine will have a similar safety profile as seasonal flu vaccines, which have a very good safety track record.

**16) Does the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine contain thimerosal?**

Some do. Most inactivated flu vaccines (injectable vaccines or "flu shots") distributed in the United States currently have only a small amount of thimerosal as a preservative. The nasal spray flu vaccine does not contain thimerosal.

**17) Is it safe for children to receive a flu vaccine that contains thimerosal?**

There is no scientific evidence of harm caused by the small amount of thimerosal in vaccines. The following websites provide additional information:

US Food & Drug Administration ([www.fda.gov/cber/vaccine/thimerosal.htm#t1](http://www.fda.gov/cber/vaccine/thimerosal.htm#t1))

CDC ([www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/thimerosal\\_qa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/thimerosal_qa.htm))

**18) My child is under 10 years old. The “Dear Parents” letter says children under age 10 years will need a 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine dose at least 4 weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> one. Since there will be only one clinic per school, where can my child receive his/her second dose of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?**

Please schedule an appointment with your child’s doctor if he/she needs a second dose of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. If your child does not have a regular doctor, please call 2-1-1 or visit [www.flu.hawaii.gov](http://www.flu.hawaii.gov) for a clinic near you.

**19) I have more questions about the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine and/or the school-based influenza vaccination program. Where can I get more information?**

For more information about the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, visit [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination)

For more information about the school-based influenza vaccination program, please call 2-1-1.