

# **Seasonal and 2009 H1N1 Influenza Vaccine Priority Groups**

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

### **Priority Groups Seasonal Flu Vaccine**

- Children six months through four years
- Older children with increased risk of complications from influenza
- People of all ages with chronic diseases and at increased risk of complication from flu
- People with compromised immune systems
- People 65 years or older
- Residents of long-term care facilities

### **Priority Groups H1N1 Flu Vaccine**

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than six months of age
- Health care and EMS personnel
- People six months through 24 years of age
- People ages 25 through 64 years of age who are at a higher risk for H1N1 infection because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems

### **What does priority group mean?**

A priority group refers to persons who are recommended to receive the vaccines before others if the vaccine is in limited supply. Persons in priority groups are at the highest risk to be infected or suffer complications from infection.

### **Why do we have priority groups for the seasonal flu and 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine?**

Vaccine supplies are sometimes limited. Priority groups are established to ensure that individuals who have a higher risk of serious illness from an influenza infection can be vaccinated first.

### **Why are the priority groups different for seasonal and H1N1 influenza?**

Studies of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus show that serious illness is occurring in different populations than those affected by the seasonal flu. Those over age 50 appear to have some immunity to H1N1 that may be due to past exposure to other, similar flu viruses. In the cases seen so far, serious complications from H1N1 seem to be common amongst young children – especially children with a chronic illness – infants, and pregnant women.

### **If I am not in the priority groups, does that mean I should not receive the vaccines?**

There is or soon will be enough seasonal vaccine for everyone. The Iowa Department of Public Health recommends that all Iowans receive their seasonal flu vaccine.

The H1N1 vaccine is currently limited. As more vaccine becomes available there will be an expansion of the groups who may receive the H1N1 vaccine. The H1N1 vaccine is approved for use in anyone ages six months and older.

### **Are there other ways to prevent the spread of illness?**

Staying healthy is more than just getting a vaccine. While they help protect people from getting the disease, it's also important to take healthy steps for good health such as:

- Cover your cough – use your elbow or a tissue
- Clean your hands – with soap and water or hand sanitizer
- Contain germs – stay home when you are sick

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