

Vaccine for H1N1 virus may require two shots

U.S. orders 195 million doses-some available by mid-October, more later this year.

The H1N1 flu strain, commonly known as Swine Flu, has prompted the U.S. Government to order 195 million doses of vaccine and prepare for a widespread vaccination campaign. Experts were asked to address questions about the pandemic vaccination program and the vaccine.

Q. *What makes the new flu vaccine different from seasonal vaccines?*

A. The regular flu vaccine always has three different influenza viruses in it says Baylor College of Medicine vaccine expert Carol Baker, a member of the Government's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. That's both the nose-spray vaccine and the injectable vaccine. The three strains are the ones that are going to be around in the fall and winter, she says. The H1N1 vaccine will be made up of one virus.

Q. *What about the Swine Flu pandemic vaccine?*

A. Experts anticipate that everyone will need two doses of pandemic vaccine because the virus is so different from seasonal viruses that few- perhaps the elderly, who long ago might have encountered a virus like it- have been exposed. That means most of us lack immunity.



Q. *Who should get vaccinated for seasonal flu? Pandemic flu?*

A. Seasonal flu vaccine campaigns usually focus on the elderly and people of all ages with chronic diseases. Pandemic flu is striking a much younger population, so the government advisors recommend it be given to pregnant women, people who live with or care for children under 6 months old, health workers, anyone 6 months to 24 years old and people 25 to 64 who have chronic illnesses or immune problems.

Q. *How long will it take the vaccine to provide protection?*

A. At least a month. The two shots are given a week apart, and the immune system won't be armed until a week or so later.

Q. *When will the vaccine be available?*

A. Between 45 million and 52 million doses should be available by Mid-October. More will be made available weekly up to 195 million by year's end.

Source: Gannett News Service