

H1N1 Talking Points: 12/15/09

H1N1 Recall

The most important thing to remember is there is no safety risk, no need to be revaccinated and the vaccine should be potent enough to protect against the flu.

Sanofi Pasteur recalled 800,000 pediatric doses of H1N1 vaccine because they were not as potent as the experts would like. As part of its quality assurance program, the manufacturer performs routine, ongoing stability testing of its vaccine after the vaccine has been shipped to providers. Stability testing means measuring the strength (also called potency) of a vaccine over time. It is performed because sometimes the strength of a vaccine can go down over time.

The vaccine is intended for children aged 6-35 months, who need two doses of H1N1 approximately a month apart. Children should get the second dose.

There are no safety concerns with these doses of H1N1 vaccine. The vaccine is not contaminated, it is just slightly weaker than the standard. All lots successfully passed pre-release testing for purity, potency and safety. Children do not have to be revaccinated with the first shot – if they've had only one dose, they should get the second.

A very small amount of this vaccine has been shipped to Oregon and it hasn't been here very long. At least 400 of these doses---pre-filled syringes---arrived in Oregon on Dec. 11 and 12, to vaccine providers in Columbia, Douglas and Umatilla counties. The distributor identified four shipments of 100 doses each to Oregon. Oregon Public Health has requested they re-check the log for accuracy and we will know more soon about any other counties that may have received doses.

Sanofi Pasteur and Oregon Public Health will notify the affected vaccine providers.

The number of children vaccinated is not yet known. There is a reporting lag time of 1-5 days for electronic records and up to four weeks for the scannable forms. . The most important thing to remember is there is no safety risk, no need to be revaccinated and the vaccine should be potent enough to protect against the flu.

Parents of children who received vaccine from the recalled lots do not need to take any action, other than to complete the two-dose immunization series if not already completed. They do not need to repeat any doses.

We don't yet know how this recall will affect the supply of H1N1 vaccine in Oregon. Children age 6-35 months can receive alternative H1N1 vaccine formulations

Vaccine Supply

Do you think that you'll end up with a surplus of vaccine?

We have seen record number of people seeking vaccinations this flu season and we are seeing adequate supply of vaccine.

The most important thing right now is to make sure everyone knows where to get their vaccine and how important it is to get protected against a second wave of H1N1

The vaccine arrives each week. People are encouraged to plan to get the vaccine as soon as possible, but to be aware that in some areas you may have to wait a week or so for more vaccine to arrive.

We expect at least 1.2 doses of the vaccine by the end of the year.

Vaccine is available to everyone

Oregon Public Health, in working with our local health departments, has decided to open the H1N1 vaccine to the general public.

One of the factors in this decision was the fact that the vaccine supply has been flowing consistently to Oregon and we expect that to continue.

State and local public health experts have been monitoring the vaccine supply, hospitalizations, and deaths. There is a now reliable and steady supply of the vaccine coming into the state so that we can count on our H1N1 vaccine delivery, and it's time to make the vaccine available to everyone.

Value of H1N1 Vaccine

Vaccine is the best way to protect against H1N1 influenza.

We feel this is the best way to protect all Oregonians from another broad outbreak of H1N1 influenza. Flu often comes in waves and we are hoping to avoid another one.

Although H1N1 vaccine supplies are growing, Oregon Public Health is still encouraging people in the priority group, those most at risk, to get vaccinated right away.

H1N1

Pandemic H1N1 is not any worse than the season flu. However, because few people have immunity to the new virus, more people are at risk.

Preventive measures are important: wash your hands, cover your cough, stay home if you are sick.

To find out where to get the vaccine, the public should check the Oregon Public Health flu Web site at flu.oregon.gov or call our hotline at: 1 800-978-3040. We also have nurses on the hotline to answer questions from people with flu-like symptoms.

Every person that gets vaccinated helps to prevent another wave of the flu – both seasonal and H1N1. Help protect yourself and your family.

Recent data & waves of flu

We're currently seeing a lull, but the flu comes in waves. We're currently at:

Hospitalizations: 1,278

Deaths: 63