

SUNY FLU CLINIC FAQs

DO I NEED TO BRING MY ID TO THE FLU CLINIC?

Yes. Even if you are a faculty/staff member, please bring your SUNY ID with you.

WHICH VACCINES ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS FLU CLINIC.

Both the seasonal flu shot and the H1N1 vaccine are available. There are limited supplies of the seasonal flu vaccine. The H1N1 vaccine is available as a shot and as a nasal spray. The injectable vaccine is going to be reserved for those persons who cannot, for medical reasons, have the nasal spray vaccine.

CAN I GET BOTH VACCINES TODAY?

Yes. It is safe to get both as shots or one as a shot and one as a nasal spray vaccine.

CAN I CHOOSE WHICH VERSION OF THE H1N1 VACCINE TO RECEIVE?

You will be screened to determine if you can safely receive either vaccine. The injectable vaccine will be reserved for those who, for medical reasons, cannot get the nasal spray vaccine.

ARE THE VACCINES SAFE?

Yes. There is a small chance of having a complication from the vaccines, but the benefits of being vaccinated outweigh the risks for most people. You are much more likely to have complications from the flu than from receiving a flu shot. The H1N1 vaccine is made EXACTLY like the seasonal flu vaccine, and has a similar side effect rate.

HOW MUCH DO THE VACCINES COST?

The seasonal flu vaccine is \$5 for students and \$20 for faculty/staff. If a faculty/staff member is also a student carrying 6 or more credits this semester, and has not had their student health fee waived, and bring proof of their student status to the clinic, they can receive the student price.

There is no cost for the H1N1 vaccine, compliments of the US Government (and your taxes).

CAN I GET THE FLU FROM RECEIVING THE FLU VACCINE?

There is no intact flu virus in the injectable vaccine. You cannot get the flu from it. If you have a robust immune response, you can have several days of low grade fever and body aches following the vaccine. This is a side effect, but not the flu. It also indicates that you will have a good immunity following the vaccine (i.e. the vaccine "took" well).

The nasal spray vaccine has a weakened flu virus in it. While you cannot get the flu from it, you can get cold-like symptoms from it (sore throat, headache, cough, runny nose).

WHO SHOULD GET THE H1N1 VACCINE?

Most college aged students are in the high risk group for contracting influenza. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These target groups include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

WHO SHOULD NOT RECEIVE A FLU VACCINE?

There are some people who should not get any flu vaccine without first consulting a physician. These include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.
- People who developed [Guillain-Barré syndrome \(GBS\)](#) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously. (For information, see [General Questions and Answers on Guillain-Barré syndrome \(GBS\)](#).)
- Children younger than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group), and
- People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated.)

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THE FLU SHOT (WHAT TO EXPECT)?

The same side effects typically associated with the seasonal flu shot and the seasonal nasal spray vaccine are expected with the 2009 H1N1 flu shot and 2009 H1N1 nasal spray vaccine. These are:

The flu shot: The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that could occur are:

- Soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

If these problems occur, they begin soon after the shot, are usually mild, and usually last 1 to 2 days. Almost all people who receive influenza vaccine have no serious problems from it. However, on rare occasions, flu vaccination can cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

The nasal spray: The viruses in the nasal-spray vaccine are weakened and do not cause severe symptoms often associated with influenza illness. (In clinical studies, transmission of vaccine viruses to close contacts has occurred only rarely.)

In children, side effects from LAIV can include:

- runny nose
- wheezing
- headache
- vomiting
- muscle aches
- fever

In adults, side effects from LAIV can include

- runny nose
- headache
- sore throat
- cough

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ME TO GET THROUGH THE VACCINE PROCESS AT A SUNY POTSDAM VACCINE CLINIC?

It all depends on how many people show up for the clinic. Look for a chalkboard in the reception area. The time it takes a person to get through the clinic from the time they turn in their papers to the time they leave should be posted on it.

IS THIMEROSOL FREE VACCINE AVAILABLE?

Thimerosal is a preservative found in multi-dose vials of both the seasonal and H1N1 vaccine. Some thimerosal free vaccine has been ordered for SUNY Potsdam's vaccine clinic but it has not arrived as of the time of this writing. Ask your vaccinator if it is available if you want this type of vaccine. It is recommended that you receive this kind of vaccine if you are pregnant.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM PREGNANT?

If you are pregnant or have been pregnant within the last two weeks, it is highly recommended that you get both the seasonal and H1N1 vaccines. Pregnant women are one of the high risk groups for having complications of influenza. If you are currently pregnant, you should receive the thimerosal free vaccine.

WILL THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE PROTECT ME AGAINST THE H1N1 FLU?

Probably not. There is a small study from Mexico which shows there may be a small benefit, but you can be better protected by getting both vaccines.

IF I'VE HAD AN INFLUENZA-LIKE ILLNESS SINCE APRIL OF 2009, SHOULD I STILL GET THE H1N1 VACCINE?

Yes. Unless you were tested for H1N1 and were positive, it is recommended that you should get the H1N1 vaccine to be certain you are protected. There are other viruses that can cause an influenza-like illness.

I'VE HEARD THAT GETTING THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE CAN MAKE IT MORE LIKELY I'LL GET THE H1N1 INFECTION. SHOULD I STILL GET VACCINATED?

The studies done in the United States show that receiving the seasonal flu shot do not reduce nor increase your risk of getting H1N1 flu. A small study in Mexico shows that the seasonal flu vaccine can reduce your risk of H1N1 infection slightly. The Canadian study is another small study that showed it can slightly increase your risk of contracting H1N1 flu. In the face of conflicting data, you need to decide whether the potential risks outweigh the known benefits of getting your flu shot.

IF I AM A FACULTY/STAFF MEMBER BUT ALSO AM A STUDENT CAN I GET THE SEASONAL FLU VACCINE AT THE STUDENT PRICE?

Yes, as long as you bring proof that you are taking six or more credits this semester and you have not waived your student health fee.

AFTER I'VE HAD THE VACCINES, HOW LONG WILL THEY TAKE TO BECOME EFFECTIVE?

You will have some protection against the flu in about two weeks. Full protection occurs in 4-6 weeks. You should also remember that receiving the flu shot does not ALWAYS prevent the flu, but if you were to get the flu after a flu shot it is almost always milder in severity with a reduced risk of complications.

DO THOSE PREVIOUSLY VACCINATED AGAINST THE 1976 SWINE FLU NEED TO GET THE H1N1 VACCINE?

The 1976 swine flu virus and the 2009 H1N1 virus are different enough that its unlikely a person vaccinated in 1976 will have full protection from the 2009 H1N1. People vaccinated in 1976 should still be given the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

IF WE RUN OUT OF VACCINE, WHAT WILL BE THE CAMPUS' RESPONSE?

Supplies of both the seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine are short. The federal government controls the distribution of the H1N1 vaccine. They allocate it to the government of NY state, who distributes it to the various vaccinators. Supplies are expected to trickle in over time. As SUNY Potsdam receives H1N1vaccine, flu clinics will be arranged to distribute it. The government assures there will be enough for everyone who wants a shot to get one. It just is not going to happen right away.

The seasonal flu vaccine is also in limited supply. Most clinics (including this one) ordered their vaccine well before it was known H1N1 was going to be an issue. When we tried to order more, it was not available. Once we have used what we have, we will have no more.