

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HARRISBURG

Dear Provider:

The first doses of pandemic influenza A/H1N1 vaccine will soon be made available by the federal government for distribution in the United States, including Pennsylvania. The initial supplies of vaccine will be very limited in number, but are expected to rapidly increase in quantity throughout October and November. Based on the current information from the CDC, the first orders will be placed on September 30th, and then the manufacturers are expected to begin delivering vaccine for distribution on a weekly basis. By mid-November, all providers who have been certified (registered and signed provider agreement) to deliver pandemic H1N1 vaccine in Pennsylvania should be able to order and administer it for patients in the five priority vaccination groups.

However, because of the limited nature of the initial vaccine supplies, these doses will need to be highly focused in their distribution and use. The Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) has developed criteria to decide how best to utilize the vaccine supply. These criteria include:

- The type of vaccine available and the indications for the use of available vaccine
- ACIP recommendations:
 - Pregnant women
 - Individuals six months to 24 years of age
 - Healthcare providers and emergency medical services personnel
 - Individuals who provide care for children under six months of age
 - People under age 65 with underlying medical conditions.
- Maximizing impact using epidemiologic disease patterns (who is most affected and where is disease occurring) to control disease and reduce influenza complications

The federal government has indicated that the first available vaccine doses will be exclusively live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV). This vaccine is indicated for use primarily in healthy persons between the ages of 2-49 years. It is not indicated for pregnant women, persons with certain underlying health conditions, and health care workers who deal with severely immune suppressed persons.

The current epidemiology of pandemic H1N1 disease in Pennsylvania shows that the demographic patterns are similar to those of the first wave that occurred in the Spring. More than 70 percent of all illness is occurring in children and young adults between the ages of 5-24

years. Disease spread appears to be largely driven by transmission in these age groups in aggregate settings, especially primary schools and higher education. Both settings have already experienced disease outbreaks in some locations. Disease surveillance also demonstrates that while illness is occurring throughout the Commonwealth, currently it is more frequent in the southwest, southeast, and north central areas of the state.

PADOH anticipates that disease activity in the coming weeks will continue to increase in schools and institutions of higher education. We also know that children are the most efficient transmitters of influenza to their families and to the general community. Furthermore, because children under 10 years of age will require two doses of pandemic influenza H1N1 vaccine (ideally given 28 days apart but a minimum of 21 days apart), PADOH believes it is very important to initiate vaccination of this population as early as possible.

Therefore, based upon the vaccine type and patterns of disease, PADOH will target the initial doses of LAIV primarily to school children between the ages of 5-9 years. A smaller proportion of the available supply may be used for college students in settings where disease outbreaks have occurred and are ongoing. Efforts will be made to distribute vaccine to the three areas of the state that are experiencing the highest numbers of cases of disease, namely the southeast, southwest and north central districts.

Please note that PADOH expects additional doses of vaccine to be made available by the federal government in the coming weeks and expects approximately 2.5 million doses by the end of October. This includes both the single dose, preservative free inactivated vaccine for use in the youngest targeted groups and the multi-dose vials of inactivated vaccine for use in other priority groups. While injectable inactivated vaccine can be used in all five priority groups, it is important to note that each of the three currently licensed inactivated products are targeted to different age groups. It will be very important to know which vaccine you are ordering and receiving and the licensed indications for that specific product. At the same time inactivated vaccine is being distributed, more shipments of LAIV will also be available. This will assure that those who require two doses of vaccine can receive the second dose of LAIV, and that vaccination coverage can be extended to other groups of healthy individuals (e.g. school children age 10 years and over).

We appreciate your assistance in agreeing to register as a vaccine provider. The response by providers throughout Pennsylvania has been exceptional and assures the vaccine will be widely available throughout the state. If you have not yet completed and returned the vaccine provider agreement (with your physician license number) and the vaccine user agreements, please do so immediately. These forms must be completed and returned prior to placing an order for H1N1 vaccine. We now need your cooperation in assuring the vaccine reaches individuals in the prioritized groups, especially early in the process, as this makes the greatest impact on reducing disease transmission and protecting individuals at higher risk of influenza complications.

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If you have any questions about this information, please visit the pre-registration link at www.H1N1inPA.com or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH.

Sincerely,

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Acting Physician General