



TO: ONTARIO FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES
FROM: FIRST NATIONS INUIT HEALTH, ONTARIO REGION
SUBJECT: ONTARIO'S FLU VACCINE STRATEGY
DATE: SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

The H1N1 flu virus has rapidly spread across the world. The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu and can include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. The spread of the H1N1 flu virus is also thought to be happening in the same way that seasonal flu spreads. Individuals should continue to take normal precautions to protect themselves as they would from a regular flu, such as washing their hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes, avoiding close contact with people who are sick and stay home when ill.

Since the H1N1 flu virus came about in April 2009, the way in which it has spread shows that it is affecting more young and healthy people than the regular seasonal flu, which normally affects seniors and young children. People with underlying medical conditions and pregnant women may be at a greater risk for severe illness from H1N1.

On September 24, 2009, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) announced changes to the seasonal flu immunization campaign this fall. The approach includes phasing in two flu vaccine programs in the fall, by targeting those most at risk from complications from either of the strains of flu.

- **In October, the seasonal flu vaccine will be offered to Ontarians 65 years and over and residents of long-term care homes.**
- **H1N1 vaccine will be offered to the general population in November. There are enough vaccines for everyone living in Ontario including all First Nations.**
- **The universal seasonal influenza immunization program will be offered to all other residents six months of age and older in December/January.**

The decision to take this approach is based on scientific analysis by the province's top immunization experts. Some of the considerations that were used to come to this decision are:

- Evidence shows the H1N1 flu virus will be the main strain in circulation this fall in Ontario.



Your file

Votre référence

Our file

Notre référence

- Seniors are most at risk for complications from seasonal flu while younger people are more at risk for complications from H1N1 flu. Also, the H1N1 virus does not typically occur in persons over age 60, probably as a result of residual immunity from exposure to H1N1 prior to 1957.
- Some studies in Canada show a potential link between prior seasonal flu vaccination and risk of getting an infection with the H1N1 virus.
- There is no scientific data that supports the safety and effectiveness of administering the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine at the same time.

In your community, Community Health Nurses will be reaching out to individuals 65 years and older during the first phase of the seasonal flu vaccination campaign in October. We will provide you more information on the H1N1 vaccination campaign as soon as it becomes available. We have attached for more information the backgrounder released by the province on Ontario's Flu Vaccine Strategy.

For more information regarding the H1N1 flu virus, how to care for family members and how to avoid contracting the virus, please visit the following web-site or call our toll free line.

- www.pandemic.knet.ca
- 1-877-365-3623 (Hours of Operation: 9 am–6 pm EST, Monday-Sunday)