

HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND THE PANDEMIC INFLUENZA VACCINE



WHY IS VACCINATION IMPORTANT?

- The 2010 influenza season is likely to start earlier than usual.
- Your work places you in contact with people at risk of serious complications from influenza.
- The pandemic influenza vaccine, Panvax[®], is a safe and effective vaccine which is available now free of charge from your local doctor and some health facilities.
- Panvax[®] vaccination will help protect you and your patients from influenza.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

Pandemic influenza is likely to cause another serious influenza season this year, so it is important that all healthcare workers are vaccinated against pandemic influenza. Vaccination, along with good infection control practices, will significantly reduce the likelihood of becoming infected with influenza. This is especially important for healthcare workers who are Aboriginal, pregnant, very overweight, or who have a chronic medical condition.

PROTECTING YOUR PATIENTS

Even though pandemic H1N1 influenza was mild in most people, patients admitted to intensive care were significantly younger than in previous influenza seasons. People who commonly use healthcare settings, such as young infants, pregnant women, people with chronic medical conditions and the very overweight are at increased risk of severe illness from influenza. **Being vaccinated yourself greatly reduces the chances of transmitting influenza to your patients.**

IS PANVAX[®] SAFE?

Yes. Panvax[®] has been tested in clinical trials and carefully monitored in both Australia and the United States since its introduction last year. Panvax[®] has been found to be a safe vaccine, with no increased risk of Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Panvax[®] does not contain live influenza virus and cannot give you influenza.

Following vaccination, healthy people will sometimes experience symptoms including soreness/redness at the injection site, fever, reduced appetite, muscle aches and headache. These reactions are due to the body's immune response to the vaccine, not because of an influenza infection.

IF I INTEND TO GET THE REGULAR 2010 SEASONAL INFLUENZA VACCINE, DO I NEED PANVAX[®]?

Yes. It is important to get both Panvax[®] and the 2010 seasonal influenza vaccine because the seasonal vaccine protects against additional strains of influenza. It is safe to receive both vaccinations. Although the pandemic influenza strain will be included in the 2010 seasonal influenza vaccine, release of the seasonal vaccine is not expected until autumn. The Northern Hemisphere experienced an early start to its influenza season because of pandemic influenza. The same is likely to happen in Australia in 2010, so it is especially important that healthcare workers are vaccinated as soon as possible.

WHY IS PANVAX[®] SUPPLIED IN A MULTI-DOSE FORMULATION?

Multi-dose vials were chosen to make Panvax[®] available earlier and in large quantities. Multi-dose vials are used routinely each year in many countries for influenza vaccines and have been used previously in Australia. Multi-dose vials are safe when infection control procedures are followed.

THE FACTS

- Vaccination and good infection control practice can greatly reduce your chance of contracting or transmitting influenza.
- Healthcare workers are a priority group for pandemic influenza vaccination as well as seasonal influenza vaccination.
- Vaccination with Panvax[®] will help protect you, your patients, family and friends from pandemic influenza.
- Panvax[®] is a safe and effective vaccine, with very limited side-effects.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

NSW Health pandemic influenza website:
<http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/swineflu/>

- ATAGI advice on Panvax[®] and seasonal influenza vaccine
- Procedures for using multi-dose vials
- Information bulletins
- Communications materials

The Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Edition 2008 <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook-home>

Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing pandemic influenza website: <http://www.healthemergency.gov.au>