

## Barriers to H1N1 Vaccination: *Lessons Learned and Implications for Future Planning*

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### **Statewide H1N1 Barriers Assessment**

In early January 2011, the New Jersey Health Officers Association undertook a comprehensive statewide assessment to better understand H1N1 vaccination barriers during the 2009-2010 influenza season. The aim was to conduct research that would gather valid feedback from a variety of stakeholders including adult residents throughout the state (both those who did and did not receive the H1N1 vaccination) as well as physicians and specialists. With the assistance of Holleran, a Pennsylvania-based research firm, over 500 surveys were collected and multiple focus groups were facilitated throughout New Jersey.

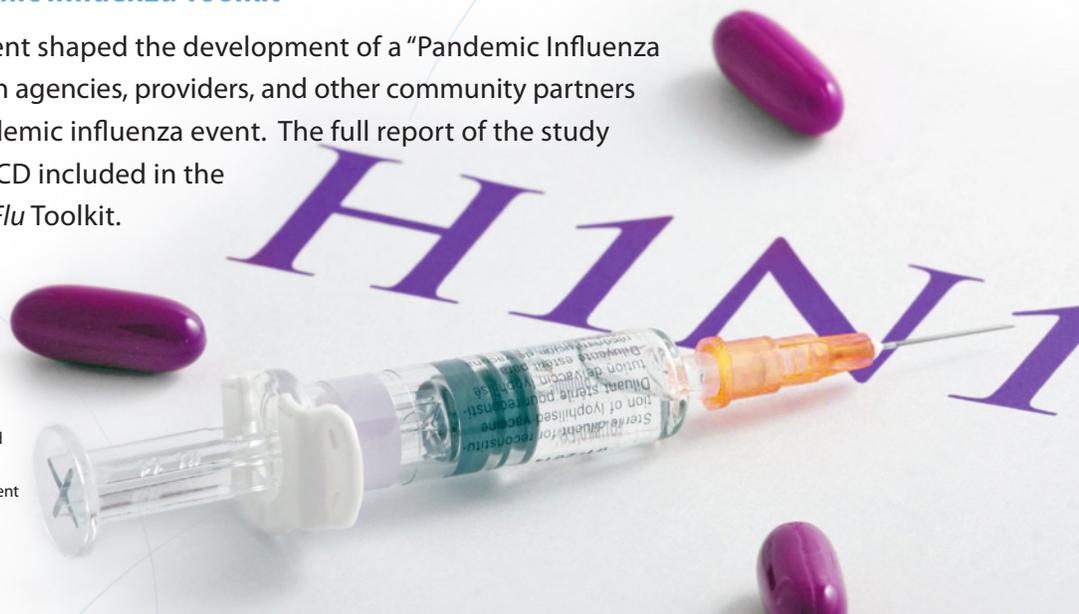
With 50% of adults saying that their motivation to receive the H1N1 vaccination was driven by a physician recommendation, the impact of the medical community cannot be understated. It was also clear that the public was not only confused by mixed messages in the media, but also by mixed messages from within the medical community. Additional concerns remain quite strong among residents regarding the safety of vaccines, the actual threat and likelihood of a mass pandemic, and financial motives of pharmaceutical companies. There appears to be a growing, passionate anti-vaccination movement, which influenced receptivity to the H1N1 vaccination.

Individuals who received the H1N1 vaccination reported positive experiences, whether they obtained the vaccine at a public health clinic, at their private physician's office, or some other location. It should be noted that the majority of individuals who received the H1N1 vaccination were among "at risk" populations, had a physical ailment that would have made them susceptible to the flu, or had a general belief in being vaccinated for influenza. Physician practices had mixed feedback regarding their rationale for or against being an H1N1 vaccinator. Physician offices provided suggestions for improving future mass vaccination efforts, specifically regarding distribution, supply, communications, and partnership opportunities.

### **Development of a Pandemic Influenza Toolkit**

Feedback from the assessment shaped the development of a "Pandemic Influenza Toolkit" to assist public health agencies, providers, and other community partners in the event of a future pandemic influenza event. The full report of the study results can be found on the CD included in the *Know What's True About the Flu* Toolkit.

Know What's True about the Flu is a collaboration of the New Jersey Health Officers Association and the New Jersey Immunization Network and was funded by a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.



# HERD IMMUNITY

## *It Saves Lives!*

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**F**ifty years ago, before vaccines were available, tens of thousands of people either died or had permanent disabilities from diseases like whooping cough, polio and the flu. Successful vaccines changed all of that, but recently more and more people are choosing not to vaccinate and we are seeing a resurgence of many diseases that were nearly forgotten.

Reports from Pennsylvania, Washington, California and New Jersey confirm that when a large enough part of a community is not vaccinated, significant outbreaks of disease occur and people get sick and even die. However, when a sufficient portion of the population is vaccinated, the spread of disease from person to person becomes unlikely. This is called **Herd Immunity**.

Without strong Herd Immunity, the communities where we live are at risk of getting diseases, including one of the most important infections for us to protect ourselves against...Influenza. These viruses cause respiratory illnesses and make many people of all ages very sick. Each year, there are about 36,000 deaths and 226,000 hospitalizations in the United States due to seasonal flu outbreaks.

As with other diseases, preventing the flu is the most effective way of limiting the spread of the disease. To achieve Herd Immunity, it's essential that everyone who can, gets the flu vaccine. This is the single best way to protect yourself and your loved ones. The more people that are protected, the less likely it is that infants, immune-deficient people and others who cannot receive a vaccine will get sick and/or die.

The flu virus is continually changing. Each year, a new vaccine is produced that contains specific antigens that teach our bodies how to fight the current, most threatening types of flu. The vaccine needs to be given every year because the flu virus continually changes and our bodies need to learn how to fight the newer, changed form of the virus. Getting a flu vaccination every year ensures adequate protection for you, your family and your community.

So, this year, when considering the flu vaccine or any other immunization, keep in mind that, by getting vaccinated, you help protect not only yourself and your loved ones, but your entire community. Those who cannot be vaccinated must rely on you and the other members of your community to get vaccinated so that Herd Immunity can be reached.

Don't gamble away your good health and long life or that of your family, friends, or community when there's a vaccine that can prevent it. **Remember, immunizations save lives and it's up to each of us to do our part.**

## Myth #1: I'm healthy. I don't need the flu vaccine.

**FACT:** Vaccinations are intended to **keep** people healthy, including children. Flu vaccines work by protecting the body **before** disease strikes. If you wait until you or your child gets sick, it will be too late for the vaccine to work.

More importantly, people who have the flu can make you sick 24 hours before they even feel or look sick themselves. So, the best way to protect yourself and your family is by getting the vaccine.

## Myth #2: The flu vaccine causes the flu.

**FACT:** Flu vaccines are made with dead or weakened viruses, and therefore it's impossible to get the flu from the flu vaccine. In fact, the vaccines strengthen the immune system to protect both children and adults from getting the flu.

## Myth #3: The flu vaccine will make me sick.

**FACT:** Medications, including vaccines, can have side effects. Typical side effects of the flu vaccine can include: soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given; sore, red, or itchy eyes; cough; low grade fever; and body aches. If any of these occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last only 1 to 2 days. Most side effects, if they occur at all, are relatively minor compared to the effects of having the flu and complications relating to the flu.

In a small percentage of people, a vaccine, like any medicine, may cause allergic reactions. Those who are allergic to eggs should not get the vaccine. Otherwise, the risk of a vaccine causing any serious harm is extremely small.

## Myth #4: So what if I get the flu, it can't be that bad.

**FACT:** The flu can make you extremely ill. In some cases, complications from the flu can even kill you. Typical symptoms include: chills, aches, fever, congestion, cough, and extreme fatigue. More severe cases can cause vomiting, diarrhea, serious respiratory problems and/or high fever and may require hospitalization. A case of the flu can last for four to five days on average, and sometimes longer.

# The Important Role of **PUBLIC HEALTH** during an Influenza Pandemic or Pandemic Threat



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## A GUIDE FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

### **The Challenge:**

*In the H1N1 Barriers Study, **91%** of the physicians who did not participate in the H1N1 vaccination campaign stated that they were not contacted by their local health departments. Moreover, of those who did not participate, **41%** stated that they would have participated if the local health department had offered support. To maximize assistance from the provider community, local health departments must provide better outreach.*

### **Here's how you can help:**

- Make phone calls or office visits to your local physicians to discuss their proclivity and/or ability to vaccinate their patients.
- If ordering the vaccine is too cumbersome for the provider, offer to procure vaccine on their behalf.
- If storing the vaccine is not possible because of inadequate refrigeration space, offer to store the bulk of vaccine at the local health department, and allow them to pick up quantities as needed.
- If documentation of vaccinations is a barrier because of limited staff, offer to assist providers with data entry by allowing them to fax consent forms to your office. If appropriate, encourage providers to use NJIS.
- Notify practitioners of health department clinic schedules and invite referrals.
- Most providers do not view local health departments as a resource for information. Encourage offices to share their emails and/or to join LINCS. That way, they are kept in the loop with changing events and recommendations.
- Provide appropriate educational materials for physicians and their clients.

***Partnering with your health care providers will benefit the public by increasing vaccine availability and may alleviate the burden of mass immunizations for local health departments.***

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**A GUIDE FOR PHYSICIANS**

***Can the local health department assist me and my staff?***

Yes. As we experienced during the H1N1 outbreak, there may be a need for private health and public health to work together. During a pandemic, one of the roles of public health is to provide mass vaccination. When an outbreak occurs, it's critical that public health assist private provider offices in order to reach as much of the population as possible.

***How do I get in touch with my local health department?***

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services maintains a website with listings of local health departments and their jurisdictions. Log on to <http://nj.gov/health/lh/documents/lhdirectory.pdf>

***Can my local health department assist my practice with procuring vaccine?***

During the H1N1 outbreak, many local health departments ordered additional quantities of vaccine to distribute to area physicians.

***We do not have the storage capacity for holding extra vaccine.***

***Are health departments willing to store extra vaccine for my practice?***

Many health departments have ample storage space and should be willing to store extra vaccine as necessary.

***The paperwork involved with documentation can be overwhelming for my staff. Can local health departments assist us with data entry?***

Given the circumstances, the health departments should have the resources to assist providers with data entry. During the H1N1 efforts, CDC provided monies to public health to assist with patient documentation.

***It is not practical for our office to administer vaccinations. Can we refer patients to the local health department?***

Yes. Local health departments regularly hold vaccination clinics and can offer referrals to additional vaccination sites.

***Are local health departments a resource for questions and for clarifications on vaccine recommendations?***

Yes. Your local health department is a valuable resource for accurate and timely information.

# All **FLU VACCINES** are **CREATED EQUAL** *How Flu Vaccines Are Made*

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he science of creating flu vaccines has been established since 1945. All steps of the process undergo strict safety and quality controls.

Each year, laboratories from around the world identify and collect strains of flu virus that are circulating. These viruses are then grown in chicken eggs to make the vaccine.

Next, fluid from the eggs is purified, the virus is killed or weakened, and the proteins that create immunity are collected. These proteins are the key component of the vaccine.

The vaccine is precisely measured and placed into vials and/or syringes. These are then sealed, inspected and labeled.

All flu vaccines, whether created for the average seasonal flu or for a newly discovered, pandemic-type flu, are manufactured following these strictly-controlled procedures.

The entire process of creating a new vaccine and making it available to the public takes about six months.

When you get a flu shot, your body learns to recognize the new type of flu virus and in about two weeks, builds a defense to attack it. If you are later exposed to the flu, your body is ready to defend you and prevent you from getting sick.



# Links to ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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*This document is available with active links  
on the Toolkit CD*



American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)  
- dedicated to the health of children; contains medical/health information for parents as well as professional healthcare workers



National Health Service (NHS) Herd immunity: [www.nhs.uk/Planners/vaccinations/Pages/sciencevaccinations.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/vaccinations/Pages/sciencevaccinations.aspx)  
- see how you can do your part to protect yourself, your family and friends, and even contribute to the elimination of a vaccine preventable disease



"Baby Be Wise - Immunize!": University of Pennsylvania: (UPENN) Health System: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruGgZbAVnko> - musical skit geared towards the general public and performed by the U PENN Health System; encouraging the flu shot as a means of keeping self and others well



National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC): [www.nphic.org/](http://www.nphic.org/) - website for public health officials; focuses on improving the public health through excellence in communication



Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC): [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines) - wide-ranging website covering immunization schedules, vaccine safety and side effect information, Q & A, Immunization requirements, and Education & Training (including patient education materials), etc.



Reasons to immunize: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6J92tWPYA\\_U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6J92tWPYA_U) - View a video that details all of the reasons that parents should have their children immunized



Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) Vaccine Education Center: [www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html](http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/home.html) - comprehensive, up to date website that provides information for parents, children, and professionals alike; includes informational fact sheets and videos and covers every vaccine



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Daily news digest: <http://www.rwjf.org/healthpolicy/digestlist.jsp> - newsletter from the RWJF focusing on a wide variety of public health issues



Families Fighting Flu: [www.familiesfightingflu.org](http://www.familiesfightingflu.org) - website encouraging flu vaccination of children, created by families who have lost children to influenza; contains video flu shot public service announcements (PSAs) & testimonials of parents discussing how flu has affected their lives



Shot by shot: [www.shotbyshot.org](http://www.shotbyshot.org) - stories about people who have been affected by vaccine preventable diseases; aimed at encouraging vaccination



Immunization Action Coalition (IAC): [www.immunize.org](http://www.immunize.org) - excellent source of childhood, adolescent and adult vaccine information; separate tabs for patients, healthcare professionals, and immunization coalitions; One stop shopping for all the vaccine information one could need.



"Vaccine Truth" by Penn and Teller: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vNQ7K\\_ow78](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vNQ7K_ow78) - innovative video for parents; discusses the importance of vaccines in light of the fear that they are related to autism



Influenza 1918; PBS: <http://to.pbs.org/gk785M>; view an in-depth documentary profiling the Spanish Flu of 1918



Virtual Immunization Communication Network (VIC) Network - [www.vicnetwork.org](http://www.vicnetwork.org) - public-private partnership network of public health organizations dedicated to effective communication strategies (for public health professionals)

# MYTHS vs FACTS

## PowerPoint Presentation

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The screen shots below are selected slides from the *Myths vs Facts* PowerPoint presentation and are not meant to represent the presentation in its entirety. See CD for full PowerPoint presentation.



KNOW WHAT'S TRUE ABOUT the FLU!

Myths

**Myth:**  
I'm healthy. I don't need the flu vaccine.

Here are the **Facts:**

- Vaccinations are intended to keep people healthy
- Children need to be vaccinated too
- Flu vaccines protect the body before disease strikes
- If you wait until you or your child gets sick, it will be too late for the vaccine to work
- People who have the flu can make you sick 24 hours before they even feel or look sick themselves
- The best way to protect yourself and your family is by getting the vaccine

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- Typical side effects of the flu vaccine can include:
  - Soreness
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  - Headache
  - Low grade fever
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- Any side effects usually begin soon after the vaccine is given, and last only 1 to 2 days
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- Typical symptoms include:
  - Chills
  - Aches
  - Fever
  - Congestion
  - Cough
  - Extreme fatigue

# How Flu Vaccines are Created

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