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Health Notification

CDC Comments on Media Reports that Seasonal Flu Vaccine Predisposes Recipients to H1N1 Influenza

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Recently, several media reports described unpublished findings from seasonal influenza vaccine investigations conducted in Canada. According to these results, the findings suggest that receiving the 2008-09 seasonal influenza vaccine (given last influenza season) was a risk factor for developing influenza caused by the 2009 H1N1 virus. In these media reports, the risk among persons who received seasonal flu vaccine was approximately double the risk of those who were not immunized, although there was no difference in risk for severe disease or complications from H1N1 influenza. These findings have not been published, nor reviewed for merit by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

No association between seasonal influenza vaccine receipt and an increased susceptibility to influenza caused by the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus (or any influenza virus) has been found in any other preliminary or published results of studies that have examined this issue to date. Preliminary results of studies conducted in the United States using methods similar to the Canadian media reports did not indicate that receiving a seasonal influenza vaccine increased the risk of developing influenza caused by the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. In addition, no other country has reported that seasonal influenza vaccine increases the risk of developing influenza caused by the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. Australian researchers recently published an article that found no association between receipt of seasonal flu vaccine and risk of developing H1N1 influenza (<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ViewArticle.aspx?ArticleId=19288>).

CDC is continuing to investigate the findings from Canada and other countries in collaboration with scientists in Canada, the World Health Organization, and other countries.

CDC continues to recommend seasonal flu vaccination. Individuals should not shun seasonal flu vaccine for fear of predisposing themselves to H1N1 influenza. Currently the vast majority of influenza being reported to CDC is 2009 H1N1. However, influenza is very unpredictable and CDC expects both 2009 H1N1 flu and seasonal flu to cause illness, hospital stays and deaths this season. The recommendations for who should receive seasonal influenza vaccine have not changed. Yearly vaccination is particularly important for the following groups of people:

- Children aged 6 months through 18 years of age
- Pregnant women (in any trimester)
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu
 - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

For more information on CDC's response to the Canadian reports, visit
<http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/s091007.htm>