

Long-Term Care Survey Alert

PUBLIC HEALTH: Brace Yourself: This Years Flu Vaccination Effort Won't Be Business As Usual

Find out how the novel H1N1 will shake things up.

Your facility will have more shots at keeping staff and residents flu-free in the coming months -- literally.

Although the seasonal influenza vaccine will reduce morbidity, including hospitalization, and mortality from seasonal flu - it won't do so for the novel H1N1 strain, cautions **Stefan Gravenstein, MD, MPH, CMD**, clinical director of quality improvement at Quality Partners of Rhode Island, and an influenza immunization expert. Only a new novel H1N1 vaccine or natural infection with the virus will confer protection, Gravenstein tells **Eli**.

Three injections required: To be fully protected against the flu, people will need to receive the seasonal flu vaccination, as usual. And they will need two separate vaccinations against the novel H1N1 administered three to four weeks apart, says **James Marx, RN, MS, CIC**, an infection control expert in San Diego. "The novel virus vaccine is most likely coming out in late October and early November," and will be free, he says.

Odd twist: Healthcare workers are on the list of people ranked as high priority for receiving novel H1N1 vaccination, whereas people age 65 and older aren't, Marx notes. Thus, "nursing facilities that get 100 doses of the vaccine should use those for staff first," he advises. The tier 1 list also includes people from ages 25 to 64 who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because they are immunocompromised or have chronic health disorders, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP).

Good news: The CDC doesn't anticipate a shortage of the novel H1N1 vaccine, according to a press statement. "There is some possibility that initially the vaccine will be available in limited quantities," however, noted the release. The CDC's APIC does advise people age 65 and older to receive the seasonal flu vaccination as soon as it is available.

Clinical tip: "Seasonal flu and novel H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day," stated the CDC-issued release.