

Vaccination

People living or staying in Stockholm County for a longer period of time qualify for free vaccination against the latest influenza A(H1N1), commonly known as swine flu. This also applies to asylum seekers and people without a residence permit. In December everybody is welcome to vaccinate themselves. One vaccine dose is sufficient for adults, while children need two. Children can be vaccinated from six months of age.

Why is vaccination so important?

The most important reason is to avoid going down with swine flu. So far, most people who have contracted swine flu have been mildly infected. But even normally healthy people have become seriously ill and have needed hospital treatment. The majority of those needing hospital treatment have been under 40 years of age, mostly children. When you vaccinate against swine flu you also protect others from becoming infected.

Pandemics like swine flu usually come in several waves, and sometimes return in a more severe form. If we are many who choose to vaccinate against the flu we could prevent it returning.

The swine flu vaccine is effective

The swine flu vaccine is effective and in all probability protects 95 per cent of those vaccinated from becoming infected by the virus.

The swine flu vaccine has nothing to do with pigs whatsoever

The vaccine is produced from an influenza virus cultivated from hens' eggs so, despite its name, has nothing to do with pigs whatsoever.

Side effects of the vaccine

Like all pharmaceuticals, influenza vaccine could have side effects. But in most cases are mild and disappear after one or two days. The most common side effects include aching muscles, reddening and swelling around where the needle entered. Some people also suffer swollen lymph glands, a high temperature and light flu symptoms. This is the body's natural reaction to the vaccine. More uncommon side effects include allergic reactions such as rash, itching and swelling in the mouth.

Like all new pharmaceuticals, the swine influenza vaccine has undergone stringent tests before being approved. The risk of contracting a serious or even life-threatening illness from swine flu is much greater than the risks involved in inoculation. The risk of serious side effects is at estimate at one in a million.

The vaccination is extra important for the risk groups

Those who risk falling seriously ill from the virus should definitely vaccinate themselves. This concerns adults, and children from six months of age suffering from:

- Chronic cardiovascular diseases
- Chronic lung diseases, such as asthma and COPD
- Chronic liver or kidney disorders

- Diabetes
- Impaired immune defence caused by, for example, hereditary immune deficiencies, ongoing treatment that impairs the immune defence, leukaemia, HIV
- Neurological and neuromuscular diseases that affect the respiratory system, such as ALS, MS, Parkinson's disease
- Extreme obesity (BMI over 40)

Also:

- Pregnant women
- Children with cerebral palsy and other multifunctional disabilities

The inoculation process

The vaccine is injected into the upper arm muscle. The smallest children are injected in the thigh. In connection with your vaccination you have to fill in a health declaration. To avoid mix-ups you also have to show your ID.

Migrants without papers, refugees in hiding and asylum seekers

Asylum seekers and migrants without papers, that is to say people without a residence permit are also entitled to vaccinate themselves against swine influenza free of charge. You can vaccinate yourself anywhere you choose that offers inoculation against swine flu. If you have no residence permit you will not need to reveal your identity in order to be vaccinated. Stockholm County Council has informed all vaccinators of this. Health care staff pledge confidentiality, which means that they are not allowed to report anybody to the Swedish Migration Board or the police.

One or two doses?

One dose of vaccine is sufficient for healthy people from 13 years of age, including healthy pregnant women and elderly people. This also concerns those belonging to a risk group but who have a healthy immune defence. Two doses are recommended for people with impaired immune defence. All children under 13 are vaccinated with two half doses.

The following should not vaccinate themselves

If you are ill

If you have an ongoing infection, for example a high temperature or bronchial infection, you should wait a few days until you are well again before taking the vaccine.

Children under six months

Children under six months are not vaccinated.

If you are acutely allergic to eggs

Inoculation depends on how allergic you are. Most people who are allergic to eggs can take the vaccine. Your doctor is the best person to assess this.

If you have been tested and know for certain that you have already had swine flu

If you have not been tested you will not know whether you have had swine flu. If you have not been tested then we recommend that you take the vaccine. If you have been tested and received confirmation of having had swine flu A(H1N1) then you are immune and do not need the vaccine. Only people who are seriously ill are tested. It is not dangerous to take the vaccine if you have already had swine flu.

Where to go for your vaccination

Pregnant women

If you are pregnant you can be vaccinated by your midwife (barnmorskemottagning) or at your maternity clinic (mödravårdscentral).

Risk categories

If you belong to a risk category you should contact your health centre (vårdcentral) or doctor.

Schoolchildren

Certain schools will offer their students vaccination. Contact your child's school to find out if they offer the vaccine. The alternative for schoolchildren is a health centre (vårdcentralen).

Children 6 months to 5 years

Children from 6 months up to and including 5 years who do not belong to the risk categories are vaccinated at child health clinics (barnvårdscentralen) or health centres (vårdscentralen).

Children 6 months to 3 years who have not yet eaten eggs and have an allergy

Children from 6 months to 3 years who have not yet eaten eggs in any shape or form **and**, in addition, have an allergy (see the list below), should be vaccinated at barn- och ungdomsmedicinsk mottagning eller på barnallergimottagning. They can also be vaccinated at a health centre (vårdcentral) who have the expertise to investigate and deal with children's allergic reactions. Contact the centre that your child receives treatment for their allergy to find out if they offer the vaccine.

Allergies:

- Eczema requiring regular cortisone cream treatment
- Cow's milk allergy where the child has a diet free from cow's milk
- Asthma-like symptoms in children under one year of age that have required hospital treatment
- Asthma **and** allergy to certain foods.

Others

If you belong to a risk category or one of the above-mentioned groups, you will be offered the vaccine at your health centre, your occupational or student health service or at a vaccination centre.

List of centres

At www.vardguiden.se/influensa there is a list of all the health care centres that offer vaccination against swine flu.

You can also phone Vårdguiden on 08-320 100, button 0, to find out where you can be vaccinated.