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An update from Jonathan Scheff, M.D.

H1N1 Vaccine Available Soon





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The H1N1 influenza vaccine is now being distributed nationally. The cost of the vaccine will be covered by the federal government, and it will be distributed to providers through state health departments. I'm pleased to note that the cost of administration of the vaccine will be covered for all our members. We are also waiving prior authorizations, copays and deductibles for office visits when members go to an in-network doctor to get an H1N1 vaccination. We have previously taken steps to ensure that health plan members have access to Tamiflu® and Relenza®, the two medications the CDC recommends for those who are hospitalized and those who are at higher risk for complications.

Illness with the H1N1 virus has ranged from mild to severe. Approximately 70 percent of people who have been hospitalized with H1N1 flu have had one or more medical conditions previously recognized as placing people at "high risk," including pregnancy, diabetes, heart disease, asthma and kidney disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) has recommended that certain groups of the population receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These target groups include pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, healthcare and emergency medical services personnel, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people of ages 25 through 64 who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

There is a great deal of information available concerning H1N1 influenza and how to avoid it. For the most authoritative information available on the H1N1 epidemic, visit the [CDC Web site](#). You may also wish to review the following:

-  [Steps to Fight the Flu](#)
-  [Seasonal and H1N1 Flu: A Guide for Parents](#)
-  [Is it a cold or is it the flu?](#)
-  [20 Tips for Cold and Flu Prevention](#)

We will work to keep our members updated as to any further developments. In the meantime, we urge you to take **all appropriate steps** to stay healthy.

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