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I'm so confused! Which flu shot do I get?

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The emergence of a new flu strain this past Spring has many people wondering which flu vaccine they need to get. For most older adults, nothing has changed. People over 65 should still receive a seasonal flu shot just as in previous years. The new H1N1 vaccine (swine flu) will not be targeted to people over 65 years old. Priority groups for the H1N1 vaccine have been identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as: 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 through 24 years of age, and people from ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for complications because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

You should get the seasonal flu vaccine as an older adult or if you in the following groups:

- Over 50 years old
- Those who have a chronic medical condition (especially heart disease, asthma, diabetes, or immune suppressing diseases)
- Those who live in a nursing home or other long-term care facility
- Those who have children/grandchildren (6 months – 5 years) at home
- People who care for anyone with the above conditions
- Healthcare workers

The above groups of people are the most vulnerable to seasonal flu-related complications. For people over 65 years, influenza is the 6th leading cause of death, so the flu is not something to take lightly.

However, there are additional preventive measures you can take to further reduce your chance of getting sick from either the seasonal flu or H1N1 and spreading any respiratory illnesses to others:

- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid close contact with those who are sick
- If you get sick, stay home until you are better

The Office on Aging at **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** maintains a list of community sites where the seasonal flu vaccine is being offered free to those who are in the vulnerable populations. Area pharmacies and grocery stores are also offering flu shots and will accept Medicare Part B and some health plans for a nominal fee. Contact your doctor's office if you feel you are eligible for the H1N1 vaccine.

Call the Office on Aging also has resource information on meals, in-home care, healthcare, transportation, legal and caregiving assistance, prescription insurance, exercise classes and much more.