

H1N1 flu Q&A- Oct. 23

Posted: Oct 22, 2009 3:00 PM EDT Thursday, October 22, 2009 3:00 PM EST Updated: Oct 23, 2009 03:56 PM EDT Susan from North Fort Myers wondered if "the swine flu vaccine is effective immediately after administering?"

Susan, the answer is no. According to the Lee County Health Department, it takes about 4 weeks from the time you are vaccinated for it to take effect.

- **Click the link in the "Related Stories" section at the right to view an archived chat session with Dr. Judith Hartner with the Lee County Health Department.**

John from Cape Coral wrote: "My wife and I are attempting to have our first child. Is the vaccine safe for her?"

According to Dr. Judith Hartner it is safe for her to get the vaccine.

Janice wrote to us about a bad reaction she had to the seasonal flu shot a couple years ago. "Based on experience I want to ask about mercury in these shots."

Dr. Hartner told us there is no mercury in the nasal mist. There are also injectable doses - meant for pregnant women and children - that do not contain mercury. Some doses for adults may contain trace amounts of mercury.

If you are concerned about this, you can ask for a preservative-free dose. But if you are not on the priority list to get the vaccine, you may have to wait. "It is one of the products that's coming in very slowly," Dr. Hartner told us. "We have very few doses of preservative free doses so we're targeting those toward pregnant women and young kids."

Hartner said there will eventually be enough vaccines for everyone, they're just trying to target their priority groups first.

Kristina from Fort Myers has her hands full with 4 children under the age of 6. She wrote "my youngest are 18 month old twins. One was diagnosed with RSV and asthma. How urgent is it that I get them the vaccine?"

Dr. Hartner recommended Kristina get the vaccine for all of her children. And since they are on the priority list, they should get the vaccine first. The only caveat is that her little one with RSV and asthma cannot have the flu mist version of the vaccine. That child must have the injection.

Also, according to the Centers for Disease Control any child under 9 years of age must get 2 doses of the vaccine, about a month apart. Click here for the CDC's shot information sheet.