

H1N1: Fact versus fiction

Posted: Oct 28, 2009 12:15 PM EDT Wednesday, October 28, 2009 12:15 PM EST Updated: Oct 28, 2009 6:51 PM EDT **LEE COUNTY:** The long awaited H1N1 flu vaccine will be available to Lee County residents on Thursday for people in high risk groups.

Many people want to know if it is safe to get the vaccine and others are turning natural food stores to build immunity.

Dr. Judith Hartner, with the Lee county Health Department, says there is no hard proof that natural products protect against swine or any flu.

She says getting natural products cannot hurt, but suggests getting the swine flu vaccine as well.

Her professional opinion has not come with out debate. Some doctors in both Lee and Collier counties are advising against the vaccine. They fear it could be unsafe.

But according to Hartner, that is a myth. She says it is safe.

"The H1N1 is made the same way as the seasonal flu and if doctors look at the research, they see the only difference is the virus used to make it," says Hartner.

Dr. Hartner also says many people are under the impression that flu shots cause the flu. She says that is not true.

With all the debate, should you take the shot in the arm to protect against swine flu? Hartner says to weigh your options.

"I recommend it because the benefits are greater than the risks," said Hartner.

If you decide to get the swine flu vaccine, the Lee County Health Department will have them Thursday at 10 a.m. at south Fort Myers High and Mariner High School in Cape Coral.

Right now, there are 9,000 vaccines available. They are expecting additional shipments.

Health department officials say eventually there will be enough H1N1 vaccine for everyone, but with a limited supply, priority will be given to those most at risk.

The vaccines will be available to pregnant women, children and young adults (6 months to 24 years old) and those 25-64 years of age with chronic medical conditions like asthma.

Everyone else is asked to wait to get their vaccine later.

The health department is also asking people not to show up early for the shots.

They also need volunteers to help with the clinics and in Lehigh Acres. Call 2-1-1 if you would like to volunteer.