

Frequently Asked Questions about Arepanrix™: Adjuvanted H1N1 Flu Vaccine

Who should get Arepanrix™?

- Arepanrix™ (with booster) is the recommended H1N1 flu vaccine for **everyone 6 months of age and older**.

Who should NOT get Arepanrix™?

- Infants under six months of age.
- Those who are severely allergic to eggs, thimerosal or formaldehyde (trace amounts of which are used in vaccine production) or those who have had allergic reactions to other vaccines.

How many doses of Arepanrix™ will I require this season to build immunity against the H1N1 flu virus?

- All individuals 10 years of age and older require 1 dose (0.5mL).
- After reviewing the evidence and expert opinions, Niagara Region Public Health recommends the following:
 - all children six months to under 10 years of age who are healthy require only 1 dose (0.25mL);
 - all children six months to under 10 years of age with immune compromising conditions (check with your doctor) should receive a second dose (minimum 21 days between doses).
- It takes about 10 to 14 days after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection/immunity.

If I have been diagnosed with the H1N1 flu virus, do I still need to get vaccinated with Arepanrix™?

- If your previous “flu” was confirmed as H1N1 through nasal swab by a health care provider, you are believed to have immunity and **do not** need to get vaccinated. If you are unsure or a swab was not done to confirm your H1N1 diagnosis, then it is recommended that you get vaccinated. If you did have the H1N1 flu virus, getting the vaccine will not harm you.

Is Arepanrix™ safe?

- Yes. The Government of Canada uses the most advanced science available to help ensure the safety and effectiveness of vaccines used in Canada.
- There are always potential health risks any time large populations receive vaccinations. Aggressive monitoring of potential adverse events and other safety measures will be implemented to ensure the public's safety.
- Arepanrix™ contains an adjuvant (booster). Adjuvants are not new - they have been used for several decades to boost the immune response to vaccines. Many of the commonly used vaccines in Canada contain an adjuvant. However, they have not previously been approved for use with the influenza (flu) vaccines in Canada. The use of an adjuvant may also provide better cross-protection against a viral drift (if the H1N1 flu virus changes/mutates a little).
- Arepanrix™ is safe and effective for pregnant women.

Does Arepanrix™ contain mercury? If so, does this pose a risk?

- Arepanrix™ contains a mercury-based preservative called thimerosal (5 mcg) to prevent contamination from the growth of bacteria. This is much less mercury than in a can of tuna.
- There is no safety reason to avoid using vaccines containing thimerosal. The best available scientific evidence to date shows no link between thimerosal-containing vaccines and any adverse health condition, including neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism.
- The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) has reviewed the safety of thimerosal and concluded that: “There is no legitimate safety reason to avoid the use of thimerosal-containing products for children or older individuals, including pregnant women.” International bodies, such as the World Health Organization and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, share this opinion.

What are the side effects of Arepanrix™?

- Arepanrix™ is safe and effective, but like any other medication, side effects can occur.
- Common side effects include soreness, redness, slight swelling or bruising at the injection site lasting up to 2 days. Mild fever, fatigue and muscle aches may occur within 6 to 12 hours after vaccination.
- Contact your family doctor or go to the nearest emergency room immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:
 - Red eyes or respiratory problems within 24 hours after vaccination;
 - High fever (over 101°F or 38.5°C);
 - Hives;
 - Swelling of the lips, tongue or face;
 - Difficulty breathing/swallowing;
 - Lasting or worsening weakness/dizziness; or
 - Convulsions.

Is it possible to get the H1N1 flu virus after getting Arepanrix™?

- Arepanrix™ contains H1N1 flu antigen (inactivated virus) and **cannot** give you the H1N1 flu virus.