



Department of Health

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Chief Health Officer Alert

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To all Hospitals and General Practitioners

Latex allergy and syringe for use with swine flu vaccine

A short term adverse reaction has occurred at the time of vaccination with the H1N1 pandemic vaccine in a person with an allergy to latex. However, the true cause of this event has not been determined and is currently being investigated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration through their normal process.

The pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza vaccine and vial is latex free. The Department of Health and Ageing has investigated the **1mL syringe in the vaccination packs and confirmed it contains latex.**

In the pre-vaccination assessment, specifically ask if the person has a latex allergy.

If the person alerts you of their latex allergy, or there is any doubt, administer the vaccine using a syringe that is latex free as noted on the syringe packaging.

While the association between the latex allergy and the adverse reaction is not proven, a prudent approach is to use a latex-free syringe for those who have a latex allergy. This is in line with the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) guidelines for hospital management of patients with latex allergies. The TGA and the Department of Health and Ageing will continue to investigate this issue and will keep you informed of progress by posting advice on www.healthemergency.gov.au

It would be appreciated if you would also pass this information on to all pandemic (swine flu) immunisation providers.

Yours sincerely

DR JOHN CARNIE
Chief Health Officer