

Administration

976 Lenzen Avenue, Second Floor | San Jose, CA 95126
408.792.5040 | 408.792.5041fax
www.sccphd.org

Public Health Department

Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System



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Mercury Free Act of California (Thimerosal-Free)

What you need to know about the exemption with the pandemic influenza A (H1N1) vaccine

What is Thimerosal?

Thimerosal is a chemical used to prevent contamination of multi-dose vials of vaccines. Thimerosal contains mercury.

What is the Mercury Free Act of California?

California's Mercury-Free Act took effect on July 1, 2006. The Act prohibits administering vaccines containing certain levels of mercury to pregnant women or to children younger than three years of age.

Why is there an exemption to the Mercury Free Act of California?

Young children and pregnant women are at high risk for infection and hospitalization with pandemic H1N1 influenza. For this reason, they are among the first groups that need to be vaccinated against pandemic H1N1 Influenza. The exemption to the Mercury Free Act has been granted because of the dangers posed by pandemic H1N1 influenza for young children and pregnant women and because supplies of thimerosal-free influenza A 2009 (H1N1) vaccine are too limited to reach these target groups in a timely way.

If I'm pregnant or a child less than 3 years old, will I still get vaccinated against pandemic H1N1 influenza if there is no supply of thimerosal-free vaccine?

We encourage all pregnant women and young children to get vaccinated against the pandemic H1N1 influenza.

During this exemption period pregnant women and children less than 3 years old:

- Will be prioritized to receive thimerosal-free pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine.
- Will **not** be denied the pandemic H1N1 influenza vaccine because the vaccine is not thimerosal-free.

Please keep in mind that the Pandemic H1N1 influenza is currently making people sick all across California, and pregnant women and young children are at high risk for infection and hospitalization. If thimerosal-free vaccine is not available, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department encourages you to get vaccinated with vaccine that contains thimerosal in order to protect yourself against H1N1 influenza. There is no convincing scientific evidence of harm caused by the low doses of thimerosal in vaccines. Thimerosal has been reduced or eliminated in vaccines as a precautionary measure. Opportunities to return for a thimerosal-free vaccination may be limited.

Dedicated to the health of the whole community

The Public Health Department is a division of Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System, owned and operated by the County of Santa Clara.