



May 2, 2009

## Vaccines and Antivirals

### How are they Different?

#### Swine Flu (Influenza A H1N1)

**Vaccines** (usually given by a shot) **are given to people to prevent them from becoming infected by a virus.** Vaccination is the primary means of preventing and controlling influenza (flu) and can provide protection over a long period of time. Influenza vaccines are made from either pieces of the dead influenza virus or weakened versions of the live virus and will not cause a person to get the disease. When a person is vaccinated (receives the vaccine), the body's immune system will make antibodies (a protein that fights infections) which will fight off infection if the person is exposed to the virus. **Currently, there is no vaccine for the swine flu.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working to develop a vaccine, but this process will take from four to six months.

**Antivirals** are drugs primarily used to treat people who have already **been infected by a virus.** These drugs are prescription medicines that can be used to treat the swine flu. **These medications must be prescribed by a health care professional** and only work against influenza viruses. Antiviral drugs can make the illness milder.

There are two antivirals recommended by the CDC for the treatment and/or prevention of infection with swine influenza viruses: Tamiflu and Relenza.

For more information, go to [www.healthyarkansas.com](http://www.healthyarkansas.com) or call the Swine Flu Hotline at 1-800-651-3493.