



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on November 25, 2009

## Vaccines Recalled in Canada After Severe Reactions

The World Health Organization (WHO) and a pharmaceutical company are advising doctors in Canada not to use a batch of H1N1 swine flu vaccines following reports that the shots were causing an unusually high number of severe allergic reactions.

At least six victims of the batch suffered from anaphylactic shock — a potentially deadly reaction — after receiving the GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) inoculation known as Aprepanrix. A spokesperson for the company told the [media](#) that the cases all surrounded one particular shipment of about 170,000 vaccines, and that similar problems had not been observed in other countries.



GSK and Canadian government health officials are investigating the batch, but the probe had not been completed as of Wednesday. The vaccines were shipped to six provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island, but it was unclear how many had already been used.

“People who have received the vaccine and have not had an allergic reaction have no reason to be concerned,” announced the Public Health Agency of Canada in a statement. “The fact that we have identified a potential safety issue underscores that our monitoring system works.”

Japanese health authorities are also reportedly sending a team to Canada to investigate the occurrence, since the Japanese government purchased almost 40 million doses from GSK. “We plan to dispatch our experts to Canada in early December, but we are considering sending them as quickly as possible,” explained an official from the Japanese health and welfare ministry. “We want to contact Canadian authorities over the reactions to the flu vaccinations so that we can take possible precautionary measures.”

The United Nations health body has jumped on the case as well. “An unusual number of severe allergies to the vaccine have been detected in Canada,” a WHO spokesman told [AFP](#). “The Canadian authorities are conducting the appropriate investigations on the vaccines. ... We need to understand what happened.” However despite the reports, the organization still recommends the vaccine.

Statistically, only about one in 100,000 should experience such a severe allergic reaction to the vaccine. Manitoba health officials suggested the numbers for the batch in question could be around one in 20,000. But the [insert](#) does warn about a variety of possible side effects ranging from nausea to debilitating neurological disorders.

“Any time you immunize somebody with something, there’s always a chance of an allergic reaction,” said Dr. John Treanor, a flu vaccine specialist at the University of Rochester. “Some people are going to have anaphylaxis, absolutely.” In Canada, as in the U.S., vaccine makers are immune from lawsuits arising from their swine flu vaccines due to government protection. And of course, some side effects



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may take much longer to show up. As of November 7, at least 36 people in Canada had suffered serious side effects linked to the vaccine, including the death of an elderly person.

According to the WHO, over 6,000 deaths around the world have been linked to the swine flu virus so far. In Canada, there have been an estimated 279 deaths tied to the H1N1, while in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "[guesstimated](#)" that there had been around 4,000. But some experts criticize the figures, especially since the CDC was already caught inflating the number of swine flu cases.

Government officials have assured the populace that the vaccine is safe and effective, but many health and medical experts disagree. There are signs that the virus has already peaked in Canada, and so far has still remained relatively mild around the world. But everybody should educate themselves about the [risks](#) of medical procedures and medicine before simply accepting government campaigns as truth.



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