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## Swine flu vaccines for everyone

### Gov't calls for inoculation of entire population in September as action plan for pandemic unveiled

Health Minister Dimitris Avramopoulos yesterday heralded the intended vaccination against swine flu of Greece's entire population of 11 million, including thousands of illegal immigrants, as the government's action plan for tackling a possible pandemic was unveiled.

"It was decided under the order of the prime minister to vaccinate all citizens and residents of the country, without exception," Avramopoulos told reporters after an Inner Cabinet meeting chaired by Premier Costas Karamanlis. Avramopoulos added that authorities will order some 24 million doses of the flu vaccine, to secure the recommended two shots for each resident, and will start administering the drugs once they have been approved by international authorities. The drugs are to be administered from mid-September, when deliveries are expected to arrive, starting with health workers and vulnerable citizens, including children, the elderly and the sick. Each citizen will have to sign a form registering for his or her inoculation.

Another matter discussed by members of the Inner Cabinet was a national action plan for dealing with a possible pandemic of the H1N1 virus. The plan envisages the establishment of special vaccination centers as well as the mobilization of the private health sector and includes seven alternative scenarios for tackling the spread of the virus. The more serious scenarios foresee the use of military and private hospitals and even hotels to treat patients and the mobilization of trainee and retired doctors, according to sources.

But Avramopoulos maintained a cautiously upbeat outlook yesterday, stressing that the flu's "mortality rates are exceptionally low" and reiterating that "we should get on with our lives as usual without concern."

In a related development yesterday, a 22-year-old man was reported to be the country's fourth serious swine flu case. The man, a kidney transplant patient, is said to be continuing treatment from home although it was unclear yesterday where he resides. The other serious H1N1 cases are two men from Crete, one aged 42 and another 33, and a 16-year-old British girl currently being treated in an Athens hospital.

More than 740 people have been diagnosed with the H1N1 virus in Greece but the majority have contracted a mild strain. Still the real number of sufferers is believed to be significantly higher than this, as not all suspect cases of the virus have been tested.

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