

## [WHO puts off giving advice on pandemic vaccines\\_\(25/5/2552\)](#)

By Laura MacInnis

GENEVA (Reuters) - The World Health Organization wants to keep monitoring the spread of H1N1 flu before issuing guidance on the production of pandemic flu vaccines, a top WHO official said on Tuesday.

"We are in the process of the most basic development of the vaccine," acting WHO assistant director-general Keiji Fukuda told a news briefing.

Work under way on candidate viruses will continue until the end of June or July, after which drug companies can start developing and testing H1N1 vaccines, according to Fukuda.

The WHO expects to make recommendations about the best balance between H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine-making "sometime during the summer," he said.

"We don't want to make recommendations too early because we are on a daily basis monitoring how the situation is evolving," he said, later adding: "We are still at the early stage of this pandemic and we have to see where it goes."

Last week, the WHO said it had decided to revamp its six-point pandemic alert scale to better reflect how severe a circulating virus is, and not just the way it is spreading.

Fukuda said the United Nations agency planned to convene scientists and public health experts within weeks to offer suggestions on how to adjust the pandemic definitions.

For now, he said the WHO was keeping its alert at Phase 5 which means a pandemic is "imminent." It will look for "large outbreaks with very large numbers of people" like those seen in Mexico or the United States before edging it to the top notch.

"That in and of itself could well be enough to take us up to pandemic Phase 6," he said.

Britain and other flu-affected countries pushed at the WHO's annual congress last week for a rethinking of the pandemic alert scale, given the mild effects experienced from H1N1 flu as it spread around the world.

Fukuda said top WHO officials agreed there were risks in moving too fast to the top level.

"If you go to declare Phase 6 without very clear evidence that there is a change in the global situation, it can lead to extra work for countries without much gain, it can lead to some level of panic, it can lead to some level of cynicism," he said.

Fukuda said the widespread awareness about the H1N1 flu and countries' efforts to prepare themselves for possible outbreaks was "more important than any definition."

"We are comfortable that the countries are doing the kinds of public health actions that need to be taken right now," he said.

**Source:** <http://www.reuters.com/article/scienceNews/idUSTRE54P42620090526>

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