



November 30, 2009

Dear Parents:

I am writing to let you know about H1N1 vaccination clinics that will be offered in area schools very soon (see schedule on reverse side). H1N1 is a new strain of the influenza virus which is easily spread. Because most of us have no immunity to H1N1, we expect a large number of people to get the flu this year. In fact, many communities have already been hit hard with flu this fall, and there are concerns that we may face another wave of flu later this winter. Flu shots are a very important way to limit the spread of flu. One dose of vaccine will be needed for people 10 years of age and older, but children under 10 years will need two doses, about one month apart, to get good immunity. No one is required to get the H1N1 vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that the following groups of people get H1N1 vaccine first:

- 1) Pregnant women (since they are more likely to get seriously ill with flu than other women their age)
- 2) People who live with or provide daycare for infants under 6 months of age (because infants under 6 months can't receive flu vaccine and are at high risk of serious illness if they get H1N1)
- 3) Children and young adults from 6 months to 24 years of age (because the virus spreads very quickly and easily through schools and universities, as we have seen)
- 4) Adults 25 years to 64 years with certain health problems such as asthma, heart disease, lung disease, immune problems, diabetes and others. Your doctor will know if you fall into this group.
- 5) Healthcare workers and Emergency Services personnel

We will be offering one after-school clinic in each school district. Children in all grade levels are encouraged to attend. In fact, anyone in the community who fits into one of the target groups listed above, may attend these clinics. It is not yet known if or when school day clinics will be held for middle and high school students, so parents are strongly encouraged to bring these older students to the after-school clinic. If you would like your child to be vaccinated, please complete the attached consent form and bring it to the after-school clinic. Consent forms will also be available at the clinic and at www.wuphd.org

Please remember that many viruses cause fever and cough. Unless you or your child have had the special lab test that proves H1N1 infection (these are nose swabs that are sent out of the area for testing and are usually done only on hospitalized patients), it is recommended that you get the H1N1 vaccine, if you are in one of the above target groups. If you cannot attend the school clinic, please contact your physician or the health department for vaccine information.

It may be a bit more challenging to stay healthy this fall and winter, but by working together we can limit the impact of influenza on our community. For good information on H1N1 flu, please go to: www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or the health department website at www.wuphd.org

Teresa L. Frankovich, M.D., M.P.H