

... an important message from the

KNOX
COUNTY Health
Department

H1N1 AND YOU

Information for Knox County students and their parents • Vol 2 Nov. 2009

Clinics scheduled for high-risk youth

Like many of the health departments in central Ohio, the Knox County Health Department has been forced to change its plans regarding distribution of H1N1 vaccine to students due to a delay in receiving the vaccine.

The health department had hoped to start school-based clinics for all students the first week in November but until more vaccine arrives, it will now conduct **three clinics for specific groups of students during the first week of November.**

Monday and Wednesday, Nov. 2 and 4, from 4:30 – 7 p.m., the health department will offer H1N1 vaccine to medically-fragile children, ages 3-18.

Medically fragile children include those with chronic heart or lung disease, such as asthma or reactive airways disease; medical conditions such as diabetes or kidney failure; or illnesses that weaken the immune system, or those who take medications that can weaken the immune system. This group will receive the vaccine in the form of an injection or shot.

There will be more than 600 doses in shot form.

Saturday, Nov. 7, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., the health department will offer the H1N1 vaccine to children ages 2-24 in the form of **nasal spray only.** There will be more than 1,500 doses of nasal spray available.

All clinics will take place at the health department, 11660 Upper Gilchrist Rd.

The **H1N1 vaccine is free** from the health department.

Vaccine: Nasal spray vs. shot

Like seasonal flu vaccine, the H1N1 vaccine comes in two forms: nasal spray or as an injection, more commonly referred to as a "shot." The majority of the H1N1 vaccine available right now is in the nasal spray. Unfortunately, a lot of people in our area are not familiar with the nasal spray and are shying away from it.

The nasal spray is recommended for healthy people, ages 2 to 49 years of age. It's highly recommended for kids because it does not hurt and is less traumatic than getting a shot.

Much of the dislike for the nasal spray is because it is made from a live virus. However, it is a weakened virus that **cannot grow** at normal body temperature, so **healthy kids will NOT** get the flu from the nasal spray. Also, because it is a live vaccine, it does not contain thimerosal.

While the nasal spray is safe and highly recommended, **it should not be**

used for certain individuals, including those who have asthma or diabetes or are allergic to eggs. Others who should not use the nasal spray include: pregnant women; anyone with a weakened immune system or a heart, lung, kidney or liver disease, metabolic disorders, anemia and other blood disorders; anyone in close contact with a person with a severely weakened immune system such as those in bone marrow transplant unit; children on long-term aspirin treatment; and anyone who has had Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

At this point, as long as both types of vaccine are available, **parents can choose what type of vaccine they want their child to receive.** However, we strongly recommend that if your child is healthy and able to take the nasal spray, please do so. Otherwise, you could be short-changing a child who can only take the vaccine in shot form.

Consent forms

Thank you to everyone who returned an H1N1 consent form to your child's school. **We will be bringing those forms to the health department for the clinics mentioned above.**

If you received a consent form, but did not return it and you want to bring your kids to a health-department sponsored-clinic, just bring the completed form with you.

For those who did not receive a consent form, there will be extras at the clinic site. Parents can also download the form from the health department website at www.knoxhealth.com

All children under 18 years of age will need a consent form signed by a parent or guardian. Youth ages 19-24 can sign for themselves.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions from your calls

Q: Will my child need more than one dose of vaccine?

A: Children older than 10 years will only need one dose. Children, ages 2- 9 years of age getting the H1N1 vaccine either in shot or nasal spray form will need two doses of the vaccine. The second dose should be given 28 or more days after the first dose. The first dose "primes" the immune system; the second dose provides immune protection. Children who only get one dose of vaccine when they need two doses may have reduced or no protection. Those needing a second dose can return to the health department in 28 days to receive their second shot on a walk-in basis during normal clinic hours.

Q: I may have had contact with someone who has the H1N1 virus. What should I do?

A: Know the signs and symptoms of the virus: fever (100+), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea. If you experience symptoms you should stay home and avoid contact with other people. If you need to seek medical care, call your provider to let them know that you are coming and follow any instructions they give you.

Q: What is the incubation period for H1N1 flu?

A: The incubation period for H1N1 is unknown but is probably 1-7 days, though more likely 1-4 days. Persons with H1N1 flu should be considered potentially contagious for up to 7 days after illness onset. Persons who continue to be ill longer than 7 days should be considered potentially contagious until all symptoms have resolved. Children might be contagious for longer periods. People with any influenza-like illness should stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medications. A fever is having a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius.

Q: Should I be concerned about children using hand sanitizer with high alcohol content?

A: If you are concerned that a child might ingest a large amount of hand sanitizer, you should make sure to monitor its use; however, in general, there is no danger from using hand sanitizer as directed on hands.

Q: What household cleaning should be done to prevent the spread of the virus?

A: Keep surfaces (bedside tables, bathroom and kitchen surfaces, and toys) clean by wiping them with a household disinfectant or a solution of water and 10% bleach. Wipe the surface and allow to air dry.

Q: How should linens, eating utensils and dishes of people who have H1N1 be handled?

A: These items do not need to be cleaned separately from other people's dishes or linens, but they should not be shared without being thoroughly washed. Linens (bed sheets and towels) should be washed in hot water using household laundry soap and tumbled dry on a hot setting. Individuals should avoid "hugging" the laundry prior to washing—carry it in a basket or tub and wash hands immediately after handling. Eating utensils and dishes should be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and water.

Q. If I have a family member at home with H1N1 flu, should I go to work?

A: If you have a family member at home sick with H1N1 flu but you are well yourself, you can go to work. Monitor your health every day and practice healthy behaviors. If you do become ill, you should stay home. If you have an underlying medical condition or are pregnant you should call your health-care provider for advice, because you might need influenza antiviral drugs to prevent getting the illness.

Q. When will the H1N1 vaccine be available for adults and where can they get the vaccine?

A: Once the top priority groups receive vaccine, it will be made available to the general population. We don't expect that to happen until the end of the year. Many local doctor's offices and pharmacies have registered to receive vaccine, so there will be several different places for people to receive it.

Q. If my child had H1N1 this summer, can they get it again? Do they need the vaccine?

A: When you get a virus your immune system mounts a response to fight it off. After that, your body has antibodies that can more easily fight off the same virus if you are exposed again. However, if your immune system is compromised you may be able to get the same virus again. Sometimes even healthy people, who may have had only a minor exposure, wouldn't have built up their full immunity. Also, if the virus changes or mutates just slightly it may leave you susceptible to getting sick from it again. Even if your child had H1N1 this summer getting the vaccine would help make sure your child has built up the needed immunity to prevent illness.

Dealing with fears

With all of the media attention, we understand that everyone is a little anxious about the H1N1 flu. The Knox County Health Department and local school officials are working together to keep you informed of the local situation.

You can reassure your children by talking with them about their fears. Give them some control by teaching simple preventive steps such as:

- **Washing hands** often with soap and warm water. Use alcohol-based or alcohol-free hand sanitizers when soap and warm water are not available;
- **Covering your cough** with a sleeve or tissue and throwing away the tissue immediately;
- **Not sharing** food utensils or drink containers;
- **Staying home** when we don't feel well.

Parents should lead by example.

A few other things to consider:

- Receiving the H1N1 vaccination is not unlike receiving other recommended vaccinations needed to attend school.
- It is important that all students treat each other with respect and not jump to conclusions about who may or may not have the flu.
- Regularly sanitize and clean all commonly used items or surfaces including counters, telephones, door knobs, and toys. Flu viruses spread in tiny droplets from coughs and sneezes. Droplets from an infected person travel through the air (up to 100 mph) and are deposited on the mouth or nose of people nearby. The virus droplets can also live on surfaces, such as door knobs, keyboards, remote controls, tables, and phones for up to 2 days.