



News...

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 27, 2009

Contact: Evonda Thomas,
Director Health and Human Services
847/866-2957

EVANSTON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FLU SEASON REMINDERS

EVANSTON, IL - The 2009-2010 influenza season is quickly approaching and it is likely we will be contending with both seasonal influenza as well as the novel H1N1 strain. This represents a challenge for all of us to stay informed and take action to protect ourselves, our families and community.

“Every year about this time, health organizations start campaigns to prompt people to prepare themselves for the upcoming flu season,” said Evonda Thomas, Evanston’s Director of Health and Human Services. “This year, preparation is even more important because we face the added risks associated with the novel H1N1 virus.”

It is very unusual to be seeing influenza-like-illness continue throughout the summer months. The Chicago and Cook County area has been no exception. Over the course of the summer all locally confirmed cases of influenza have been from the novel H1N1 influenza virus.

“We will see more illness from the H1N1 flu this fall than what has occurred this past spring and summer,” explained Health Director Thomas. “Given that flu is typically transmitted more easily in fall and winter and the uncertain impact of H1N1 co-circulating with season flu strains, we must be prepared for perhaps an earlier and prolonged influenza season.”

2009 Influenza Facts:

H1H1

This novel flu strain has affected people in more than 170 countries across the globe including the United States.

This virus is spread from person-to-person.

So far, the largest number of cases has occurred in people under the age of 25.

Symptoms include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Persons may also experience vomiting and diarrhea.

Persons with H1N1 need to stay home for at least 24 hours after their fever has gone.

Novel H1N1 vaccinations are expected to begin in late October at community and school clinics.

Vaccination priority groups include: pregnant women; people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age; and healthcare and emergency services personnel with direct patient contact.

Children 6 months through 4 years of age and children 5 through 18 years of age who have chronic medical conditions.

While novel H1N1 influenza has been the focus of attention since this past spring, it is important that we do not forget the risks posed by seasonal influenza. Some people such as the elderly, young children and people with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious complications from seasonal influenza.

Seasonal Flu

Every year, seasonal flu on average causes more than 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths from complications.

Symptoms include: fever, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and sometimes diarrhea.

This virus is spread from person-to-person.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends getting a flu shot in September or October, but it is never too late.

Seasonal vaccination priority groups include: children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday; pregnant women; people 50 years of age and older; people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions; people who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities; people who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including health care workers, household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu, and household contacts; and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age.

Now more than ever, as we approach flu season, our community needs to take preventative steps to stay healthy and limit the spread of these viruses. The Evanston Health and Human Services Department recommends:

Get vaccinated. Especially those at high risk for serious complications, and their close contacts need to start getting vaccinated. September is not too early. The protection you get from the vaccine will not wear off before the flu season is over.

Two separate shots will be available this year. It is important to understand that the H1N1 vaccine is not intended to replace the seasonal flu shot. It is intended to be used along-side seasonal flu vaccine to protect people. It is anticipated that seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines may be administered on the same day.

Evanston seasonal and H1N1 immunization clinics will be announced shortly.

Remember the 3 C's:

Clean – properly wash your hands frequently. Studies have shown that the flu virus can survive on environmental surfaces and can infect a person up to 8 hours after being deposited on the surface. Routinely clean areas that multiple people touch often. Special cleaning with bleach and other special cleaners is not necessary.

Cover – cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.

Contain – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick. There is much each of us can do to

prevent the spread of flu in the workplace, schools and throughout the community. Persons with flu-like symptoms should stay home from school, work or social gatherings until 24 hours after their fever has gone. People give off more flu virus when they have a fever. So, staying home during this time will be especially important to not spread the flu to co-workers, friends or fellow students.

Talk with the children: Since influenza is spread as a result of person to person contact, it is very important for people in public to be diligent in following the 3 C's. School aged students will have the greatest impact on our community's health. It is imperative that parents and teachers talk to students about how best to minimize the potential for spreading the influenza viruses.

Important Note for At Risk Individuals: People at high risk for influenza complications who become ill with influenza-like illness should speak with their health care provider as soon as possible. Early treatment with antiviral medications is very important for people at high risk because it can prevent hospitalizations or deaths. People at high risk include those who are pregnant, have asthma or diabetes, have compromised immune systems or have neuromuscular diseases.

For more information on seasonal and novel H1N1 flu log onto the following websites:

Center for Disease Control at: www.cdc.gov or Evanston Health and Human Services at: www.cityofevanston.org/health. Additional supporting seasonal H1N1 flu information and brochures at:

CDC

Seasonal Influenza

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

Key Facts about Flu Vaccine

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>

Preventing Seasonal Flu

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>

Questions/Answers H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu) and You

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>

CDC Says "Take 3" Steps to Fight the Flu

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing.htm>

Seasonal and Novel H1N1Flu – A Guide for Parents

http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flugallery/2009-10/parents_guide.htm

Illinois Department of Public Health

Seasonal Influenza

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/flu/index.htm>

H1N1

http://www.idph.state.il.us/h1n1_flu/index.htm

###