



JEFFERSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Hillsboro Office
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November 6, 2009

Ron Swafford
Crystal City School District
1100 Mississippi Avenue
Crystal City, MO 63019

Dear Superintendent Swafford,

The 2009 Novel H1N1 Influenza Type A virus, also called "swine flu" began to affect our community in April, continued to cause illnesses through the summer and has resulted in significant numbers of cases this fall. The World Health Organization has called H1N1 the fastest spreading pandemic on record. Currently influenza activity is widespread in 48 US states. This virus has disproportionately affected pregnant women, children (especially 5-14 year olds) and non-elderly with chronic medical conditions. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control has identified high risk groups who should receive H1N1 vaccine in priority order: Pregnant women; people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age (children under six months cannot be immunized); healthcare and emergency medical services personnel; persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old; and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age who are at higher risk for 2009 H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

The supply of H1N1 vaccine has been slower to arrive than was expected, and what is available is being provided to the priority groups. In Jefferson County, the vaccine that has been received so far by Jefferson County Health Department (JCHD) has been offered to OB-GYN practices to cover pregnant women; to Pediatricians and Family Practices to immunize younger children; to First Responder agencies and to Jefferson Regional Medical Center to keep their staff members working and able to deliver necessary healthcare services. H1N1 immunization clinics have also been held and will continue to be scheduled at the Health Department's Hillsboro office for these high risk groups. JCHD is in the process of scheduling immunizations in daycare centers and for school districts as more vaccine becomes available. The approach being used so far has been to give priority individuals a number of opportunities for immunization. If a high risk person cannot get H1N1 vaccine through their physician or through their school or daycare, they should call JCHD at 636-797-3737 for an appointment.

The biggest obstacle to planning and holding H1N1 immunization clinics is vaccine supply. As of last week, the Centers for Disease Control had expected 100 million doses of H1N1 vaccine to have been available nationwide. Instead, about sixteen million doses had been delivered. Missouri had received one quarter of the vaccine ordered. JCHD began receiving weekly vaccine shipments three weeks ago, but has no control over the amount received. The amount of vaccine coming is not known until a few days prior to delivery.

The Health Department would like to offer H1N1 immunizations at schools since school-age children are highly affected. Because of the vaccine situation, it is impossible at this point in time to schedule and immunize large groups of people at one time. This presents numerous logistical problems for the schools. JCHD has consulted with the school districts in the county and the consensus immunization option is to begin with smaller school districts so they can be completed quickly and move to larger districts as more vaccine becomes available. If enough students can be immunized in a given district, "herd immunity" is provided to all students. This doesn't happen if small segments of the school population are immunized over time. One problem to this approach is the difficulty of predicting when a given school district will be scheduled. The Health Department will give as much notice to the school and parents as possible. Vaccine supplies are expected to increase and school districts will be scheduled as quickly as possible. Large community clinics may be held to offer vaccine to anyone wanting an H1N1 immunization, but there is no schedule for those at this time.

Following are some other important points:

- Missouri state statute did not allow vaccines with the Thimerosal preservative to be given to pregnant women and children under three years of age. That restriction has been set aside.
- Children up to ten years of age need two doses of H1N1 vaccine given at least three weeks apart to be protected. Anyone ten and older needs only one dose.
- Even if someone is suspected of having had H1N1 disease, the Centers for Disease Control recommends they still be immunized. The vaccine will cause no harm and will likely provide better immunity.



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- Millions of doses of the vaccine have already been delivered nationwide, and it been shown to be safe and effective.
- Cases of illness in a pandemic occur in waves of six to twelve weeks for up to a year or longer. The first wave of this outbreak occurred this spring and we are currently in the second wave. Even if cases begin to decline, future waves are likely and immunization is strongly encouraged.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dennis M. Diehl, Director
Jefferson County Health Department