

Cook County Department of Public Health

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

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Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H.
Chief Operating Officer

October 13, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian:

This Fall / Winter presents parents and schools with two influenza (flu) challenges: regular seasonal flu, and the new H1N1 (swine) flu. Seasonal flu vaccine is available now, and the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) strongly recommends that you and your family get the seasonal flu vaccine.

For H1N1 flu, the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that certain groups of people, including pregnant women and children and young people 6 months through 24 years of age, be the first to get vaccinated against the H1N1 flu virus. While this new H1N1 flu virus has caused mild to severe illness resulting in hospitalization and deaths in both children and adults, children have been most affected and are considered at high risk of infection. Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease and we encourage all parents to get their child vaccinated as soon as vaccine is available. This is especially important for children with chronic health conditions, such as asthma and diabetes.

There are a variety of ways you can obtain H1N1 vaccine for your child. First and foremost, we urge all parents to contact their health care provider to schedule an appointment to vaccinate their child with the H1N1 vaccine. Your health care provider is the ideal source for your family's personal health needs including flu vaccinations. If your health care provider does not have vaccine available, some retail pharmacies will also be offering vaccine and should be considered as a viable option.

Additionally, CCDPH is working closely with area School Districts to offer at no cost the H1N1 flu vaccine to children in suburban Cook County schools. This effort will initially focus on pre-kindergarten through eighth grades and is expected to begin this Fall / Winter. Participating schools will send you an informational packet including a consent form. Vaccine will not be given to your child without your written consent.

Only one dose of vaccine will be offered to children in the schools served by this program. CDC recommends that children through 9 years of age receive 2 doses, given one month apart, to be protected. Therefore, you will need to arrange to have a second dose of vaccine administered to your child by a health care provider. Older children need only one dose of vaccine.

CCDPH encourages you to vaccinate your child as soon as possible. For questions or additional information about the H1N1 vaccine or our school vaccination program, please call 708-492-2828 between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 pm., e-mail BeAware@ccdph.net, or visit the CCDPH website at www.cookcountypublichealth.org.

Sincerely,

Stephen A. Martin, Jr. Ph.D., MPH
Chief Operating Officer

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