

September 11, 2009

CATEGORY: News Release
RELEASE DATE: For Immediate Release
RE: H1N1 (Swine Flu) Response Planning Update
CONTACT: E. W. Gray, M.D., Health Officer, Northeast Tri County Health District

Northeast Tri County Health District has been working with community health care providers, hospitals, local county government, schools and other community members throughout the summer to plan for the possibility of an outbreak of H1N1 influenza in our communities. The Health District met with area school superintendents on September 8, 2009. That discussion included working towards a goal of keeping schools open. Schools will continue their thorough cleaning methods and teaching children to cover their cough and wash their hands. The group also discussed the possibility of H1N1 vaccination clinics at the schools, both before and after school.

As of September 11, 2009 there have been no individuals in Ferry, Pend Oreille or Stevens Counties testing positive for the H1N1 virus. This will likely change as the influenza season continues and residents are exposed. The severity of the H1N1 virus has not changed here in Washington State or anywhere around the world, and so far it has not been more severe than the typical seasonal flu. However, since it is a new virus, most people are susceptible to catching it. Unlike the seasonal flu, H1N1 virus has caused a larger proportion of cases and hospitalizations in younger people, with more than 80% of the hospitalized cases happening among people less than fifty (50) years of age.

A vaccine to protect against H1N1 is currently being tested. We expect delivery of the first large amount of vaccine in the middle of October. Most of our area health care providers and several pharmacies, as well as Northeast Tri County Health District, have indicated that they will order the H1N1 vaccine. Watch for information in your community about where vaccine is available.

Public health officials recommend that everyone who is eligible to receive the seasonal flu vaccine should get it every year. If you are eligible to receive H1N1 flu vaccine when it is available, you should consider getting that vaccine as well. You may be able to receive both vaccines at the same time, though the seasonal flu vaccine is currently available in our communities. People are encouraged to get the H1N1 vaccine if they are eligible, but it will not be mandatory. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has suggested that the following groups be among the first to get vaccine: pregnant women, caregivers and household contacts for children younger than six (6) months of age, health care and emergency services workers, everyone from six (6) months to twenty-four (24) years of age, those from twenty-five (25) to sixty-four (64) years of age with health conditions that put them at higher risk of complications from the flu. Those who are at risk for severe complications of influenza (children under two (2) years old; pregnant women; adults over sixty-five (65) years old; residents of long-term care facilities; people with chronic lung, heart, kidney or liver disease; diabetes; sickle cell anemia; immunosuppression or receiving chemotherapy for cancer), should contact your health care provider to discuss getting the H1N1 vaccine.

To protect yourself from getting the flu:

Get vaccinated when the vaccine is available.

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and clean your hands.

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people; don't share glasses or eating utensils.

Wash a sick person's laundry in hot water and dry it on high. Wear gloves or wash your hands after touching laundry.

Stay home from work or school if you are sick.

In children, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Fever with a rash

In adults, emergency warning signs that need urgent medical attention include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting

Links to the most current information regarding H1N1 are available on the Health District website: www.netchd.org. If you or your group are interested in a presentation regarding H1N1 influenza, contact the Health District office in your community:

If you have any questions, please contact your local Health District office:

Health District Offices:	Colville Community Health	(509) 684-5048
	Colville Environmental Health	(509) 684-2262
	Newport Community/Environmental Health	(509) 447-3131
	Republic Community/Environmental Health	(509) 775-3111

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