

Department of Health and Senior Services
News Releases
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Department of Health and Senior Services Announces Temporary Suspension of Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Mandate

Health and Senior Services Commissioner Heather Howard announced today that due to limited seasonal flu vaccine availability, DHSS will suspend, for this school year, the mandatory requirement for children six months through 59 months of age attending any child-care center or preschool facility to receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine .

This suspension is based on delays in seasonal influenza vaccine production that have resulted in a delay in delivery and a supply shortage within New Jersey and across the nation. Flu vaccine manufacturing issues are beyond the control of the state of New Jersey.

Despite the suspension of this mandate, the Department strongly recommends that all children six months through 59 months of age attending any child-care center or preschool facility receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine . The Department believes that widespread use of influenza vaccine among preschool-aged children is the best way to prevent influenza and will decrease the incidence of influenza among both children and adults.

Parents should visit the Department's website at nj.gov/health and use the Find a Flu Shot Locators to find seasonal flu vaccine clinics. In addition, the Department implemented a toll-free hotline (1-866-321-9571) operating every day to provide general information about vaccine availability.

The Department does expect additional seasonal influenza vaccine in December. However, at this time, it is difficult to determine if this supply will be sufficient to meet the demand.

DHSS H1N1 Weekly Update:

Surveillance:

Currently, there is widespread influenza-like activity in New Jersey , which signifies there is flu activity in virtually every county in the state. This week's influenza-like activity report is available at <http://nj.gov/health/flu/fluinfo> .

The Department of Health and senior Services is reporting one death in this week's report to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. DHSS is reporting the death of a 35-year-old male from Morris County who died Nov. 16.

Including the death being reported to the CDC today, a total of 11 H1N1 deaths have been reported to the CDC since Sept. 1, 2009. There were 18 deaths reported to the CDC during last spring's H1N1 outbreak.

Vaccine Availability:

A total of 1,400,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine has been shipped into NJ.

Facility Type	Received Doses
County and local health departments	688,000
Physicians' offices and employee health services	401,600
Hospitals	144,400
Community Health Centers	51,300
Colleges and schools	39,800
Government agency and health care facilities that serve target populations	49,500
Retail pharmacies	25,400

Vaccine continues to arrive in New Jersey in limited shipments. The federal government has assured DHSS that they will be able to produce and distribute enough vaccine for everyone who wants it. However, with limited vaccine available at this time, it is important to first target the individuals most susceptible to H1N1 flu. For information on the vaccine distribution system from the federal government, visit http://nj.gov/health/flu/vac_ordering.shtml

H1N1 Vaccine Target Groups:

It is recommended that certain target groups be the first to receive the H1N1 vaccine as it becomes available. These groups include: Pregnant women Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel All people from 6 months through 24 years of age Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.

Finding a flu shot:

The following tools may be helpful for New Jerseyans seeking an H1N1 flu shot: The DHSS website (www.nj.gov/health/h1n1) has two flu shot locators to help individuals find public health clinics that are being planned and will be announced when vaccine is available, as well as to find clinics with scheduled dates. Contact your physician, community health center, local pharmacy, local or county health department, hospital or school. Many doctors, health clinics and schools are providing vaccine to their patients and students, while local health departments, pharmacies and some hospitals are offering clinics to the public. Call New Jersey 's H1N1 Information Hotline - 1-866-321-9571.

Antiviral Medications:

The Department has entered into an agreement with all Walgreen stores in the state to make available antiviral medications that will specifically be offered to uninsured and underinsured residents. The Department is also distributing antivirals to New Jersey 's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). Antivirals will be available tomorrow (Wednesday, Nov. 25). Walgreens will provide these medications with a valid prescription. Medications received from pharmacies will cost a small administration fee. Medications received from FQHCs will be free to the FQHCs uninsured patients.

State Public Call Center :

A state H1N1 information call center was activated on October 6. To date, the call center has received nearly 25,000 calls from the general public, healthcare providers, and others. The overwhelming majority of the calls are regarding flu vaccine and vaccine clinic questions from the general public. The call center is open seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. It will be closed on Thanksgiving Day.

The toll free number is 866-321-9571

Hospital Visiting Restrictions:

Many New Jersey hospitals have restricted their visitation policy to help reduce the spread of illness. The restrictions do not allow individuals with influenza-like symptoms or those who are under 18 years of age.

The Department of Health and Senior Services supports this effort to reduce the spread of H1N1 influenza as well as other infectious diseases.

Communications:

The Department's H1N1 website (www.nj.gov/health/H1N1) is the source for up-to-date information on H1N1 influenza. The website also contains videos, public service announcements, press releases, posters and flyers. The website is updated frequently, so please visit daily for new information and links.

Individuals who would like to receive updated H1N1 information can also follow DHSS on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/FluNJ>.

Stop the Spread:

There are certain prevention actions everyone can take to help slow the spread of H1N1 this fall and winter. These actions include common-sense measures to limit the spread of germs, including: Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it and then wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way. Stay home if you are sick.

Questions and Answers:

Can the seasonal flu vaccine and 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine be given at the same time?

If you are receiving both the seasonal flu vaccine and H1N1 vaccine in the form of nasal mist, they cannot be given at the same time. They must be separated by a minimum of 14 days.

If you receive one vaccine in the form of nasal mist and the other in an injectable form—or both in injectable form—they can be given at the same time.

You should also tell your health care provider if you received any other vaccines within the past month or plan to get any within the next month.

My child is due for a second dose of H1N1 vaccine and I'm being told he has to wait because the limited amount of vaccine needs to go to other children who have not yet received their first dose. If my child gets his second dose more than four weeks after the first one, is he still protected against H1N1?

The span of 4 weeks between doses is the recommended minimum time. The 2nd dose can be given after 4 weeks and still result in the same level of protection for your child. With just one dose, your child is protected against the flu, but for full protection a second dose should be administered. It is recommended that your child obtain the 2nd dose when it becomes available.