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CITY OF MILWAUKEE HEALTH DEPARTMENT LAUNCHES PUBLIC H1N1 VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

MHD schedules Public H1N1 Vaccination Clinics over next several weeks

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) held its first 2009 H1N1 mass vaccination clinic for City of Milwaukee residents ages 2-49 who do not have any underlying chronic medical conditions on Friday, October 23, 2009 from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm at Sara Scott Middle School, located at 1017 N. 12th Street.

If vaccine supplies remain, clinics will be held on Saturday, October 24, from 10AM-3PM, at both South Division High School, located at 1515 W. Lapham, and Sarah Scott Complex.

H1N1 flu vaccine will be provided free of charge and on voluntary first-come first-served basis to all individuals wishing to receive them. Clinics in the City are being promoted for underinsured and uninsured individuals and families who would not be able to readily receive vaccination from a medical provider. If vaccine supplies are available, the MHD will continue to hold public vaccination clinics over the next several weeks to ensure that public demand is met.

Health officials say the H1N1 vaccine is made the same way as regular seasonal flu vaccine, and, like seasonal flu vaccine, is very safe and effective. They encourage everyone in the recommended groups to get vaccinated now.

The public should understand several important points regarding these clinics:

- The vaccinations are provided on a first-come first-served basis, but only while vaccine supplies last. Additional clinics will be held Saturday, October 24, only if vaccine remains.
- All routine MHD clinics (WIC, walk-in, etc) will be suspended during the mass vaccination campaign
- The H1N1 flu vaccinations will be provided free of charge
- Seasonal flu vaccine and other childhood immunizations will not be administered at any of the H1N1 vaccination clinics
- Depending on vaccine availability, individuals might not be given a choice as to the type of vaccine (injectable vs nasal spray) that they will be offered at the clinic
- People should not come to these clinics if they have symptoms of influenza-like illness, including fever, cough, or sore throat.

The MHD also asks that people who have health insurance and can get this vaccination from their own healthcare provider do so, in order to allow the limited vaccine available at the MHD's mass clinics to be used for those who can't get their vaccine from their own doctor or clinic. Many private healthcare providers will be receiving the H1N1 vaccine in the coming weeks.

Think Health. Act Now!

“Getting a flu shot is the most effective way to prevent infection, to prevent spread of the illness, and to keep Milwaukee healthy during this outbreak” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “I urge Milwaukeeans to get their flu shots every year, and this year it’s more important than ever.”

Health officials stress that this year there is need for protection against both seasonal influenza and the novel 2009 H1N1 influenza. Therefore, people should get the novel H1N1 vaccine *in addition* to the regular seasonal influenza vaccine because the regular seasonal flu vaccine is not expected to protect against the novel 2009 H1N1 flu.

Because the people who are most at risk of getting novel H1N1 influenza and its complications are somewhat different than for regular, seasonal influenza, the MHD is *especially* recommending the novel H1N1 vaccine for members of the general public who are in one of the following target groups:

- children aged 6 months to 18 years, and young adults aged 18-24
- pregnant women
- adults aged 25-64 who have underlying medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, other heart or lung problems, immune system problems, and other chronic medical conditions
- People who live with or care for infants under 6 months of age

It is also very important for all health care workers to get both the seasonal influenza vaccine and the novel H1N1 vaccine, in order to prevent the spread of influenza in health care settings.

There are two types of influenza vaccine: injectable and nasal. The injectable can be used for almost anyone aged 6 months or older, while the nasal is only for healthy people aged 2 years to 49 years. It is expected that the injectable H1N1 vaccine will be in short supply over the next several weeks, but supplies of the nasal H1N1 vaccine are currently good, and it is primarily the nasal vaccine that will be available at the MHD clinics on Friday and Saturday.

Milwaukee Health Commissioner Bevan K. Baker emphasized that novel H1N1 flu, like regular seasonal influenza, spreads person to person when a person infected with the flu coughs or sneezes and the uninfected person breathes in the virus.

“That’s why we continue to stress that it’s essential to stay home from work or school when ill with flu-like symptoms,” said Commissioner Baker. “Stay home when you’re sick to prevent exposing your friends and co-workers, and especially high-risk individuals, such as pregnant women or people with other illnesses like asthma or diabetes, to this new virus.”

Health officials define “Influenza-like illness” as fever plus either cough or sore throat. Other symptoms of influenza can include runny or stuffy nose, fatigue, headache, muscle aches, and sometimes even vomiting or diarrhea. Currently, Health Department surveillance indicates that influenza-like illness is at moderate levels within the Milwaukee community, and has been increasing significantly over the past several weeks.

Health officials again stressed that mildly ill individuals whose condition is not worsening should call their doctor to find out if antiviral treatment is needed. If you are only mildly ill, it is better to call your doctor first, as some situations can be managed by phone. Mildly ill individuals should not go to the emergency department unless instructed to do so by their doctor.

In addition to vaccination, some ways to stay healthy and to protect yourself and those around you from getting the flu include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your upper sleeve. If you use a tissue, throw it away after one use.
- Avoid being exposed to people who are sick with flu-like symptoms.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Eat nutritious meals, get plenty of rest, and do not smoke.

For more information contact 211 or visit the MHD website at www.milwaukee.gov/flu.