



JEFFERSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

405 MAIN STREET

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H1N1 INFLUENZA AND SCHOOLS

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PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS MAY BE REVISED DEPENDING ON CHANGES IN THE NUMBER OF CASES AND/OR THE SEVERITY OF ILLNESS.

BACKGROUND:

- H1N1 influenza cases have continued to crop up throughout the summer in congregate settings such as summer camps. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that over one million cases have occurred in the United States.
- The largest number of cases has been in people between the ages of five and 24 years old.
- We expect cases to occur in the school environment shortly after school begins.
- H1N1 vaccine will be available at the earliest the in mid-October, but possibly not until later in the year.
- All high risk groups will be encouraged to get seasonal influenza vaccine early this year, starting after Labor Day.

UNTIL H1N1 VACCINE BECOMES AVAILABLE:

- Each school needs to have a plan, including communication and notification.
- Three important things can be done:
 - Practice good hand washing as often as possible, including use of hand sanitizers when necessary. Does everyone have access to hot water, hand soap and towels? Is hand washing education needed?
 - Everyone should be strongly encouraged to cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Do not cough or sneeze into your hand.
 - Students and staff should stay home when they are sick. They can return after their fever drops below 100 degrees F for at least 24 hours.
- Anti-viral medications are available, but must be prescribed early in the course of illness and usually only reduce the severity of symptoms and shorten the length of illness.
- Move students and staff who become sick at school to a separate room until they are able to leave.
- Routine cleaning and sanitizing is all that is recommended.
- School closing decisions should be based on the absentee rates among students and/or staff. It is most effective to remain closed for 5-7 days.

WHEN H1N1 VACCINE BECOMES AVAILABLE:

The groups recommended to receive the novel H1N1 influenza vaccine include:

- **Pregnant women** because they are at higher risk of complications and can potentially provide protection to infants who cannot be vaccinated;
- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age** because younger infants are at higher risk of influenza-related complications and cannot



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be vaccinated. Vaccination of those in close contact with infants less than 6 months old might help protect infants by “cocooning” them from the virus;

- **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel** because infections among healthcare workers have been reported and this can be a potential source of infection for vulnerable patients. Also, increased absenteeism in this population could reduce healthcare system capacity;
- **All people from 6 months through 24 years of age**
 - **Children from 6 months through 18 years of age** because we have seen many cases of novel H1N1 influenza in children and they are in close contact with each other in school and day care settings, which increases the likelihood of disease spread, and
 - **Young adults 19 through 24 years of age** because we have seen many cases of novel H1N1 influenza in these healthy young adults and they often live, work, and study in close proximity, and they are a frequently mobile population; and,
- **Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.**

- It is likely that H1N1 immunization will require two doses, given three to four weeks apart.
- **Because school-aged children are a high-risk group and there are over 38,000 in the county, Jefferson County Health Department feels the most effective and efficient approach is to conduct school-based H1N1 immunization clinics.**
- The focus of immunization is to prevent illness and resulting absenteeism.
- Consent forms and other materials can be sent home to parents and must be signed and returned.
- Vaccine will be provided to students, staff and any high risk family members that want to attend. Parents are welcome to attend, but will not be required to be present.
- Vaccine will also be available at the Health Department offices and at other community-based clinics.
- A significant unknown at this time is when the H1N1 vaccine will be available, so scheduling cannot be done now.

CAN SCHOOL-BASED CLINICS BE DONE IN YOUR DISTRICT, AND WHAT HAS TO BE DONE TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN?