



INYO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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More Virus, More Deaths, More Vaccine

The Eastern Sierra continues to see rising evidence of the presence of the H1N1 influenza virus in our communities. Visits to doctors' offices are increased for influenza-like illness, as are prescriptions for anti-viral medication. Northern Inyo Hospital is reporting an increase in Emergency Room visits and hospitalizations due to pneumonia and influenza-like illness. School absenteeism is increased.

In the USA, 22 children died last week alone from H1N1 infections. This brings the total so far to 114 children. Previously, no more than 153 children have died in any one flu season. This year, we still have 6 months to go!! In the past several months, 12-15 people have died each week in California from the H1 N1 influenza — this last week the number also increased to 22 deaths, mostly among the young. 28 pregnant women have died from the H1N1 influenza so far. Pregnant women represent 6% of confirmed deaths, while only 1% of the population is pregnant. 48 states are reporting widespread activity – unprecedented for this time of year.

The vaccine story is both frustrating and disappointing, as we have significant disease in the community, with very little vaccine. The doses that we have are being prioritized to the highest risk groups:

- Household members and caregivers for infants under 6 months of age
- Pregnant females
- Special needs children
- Healthcare workers with face-to-face contact with potentially contagious persons, including EMS
- Infants and children, starting at age 6 months, and increasing as vaccine becomes available

The take-home messages:

- Call your provider or the health department for up-to-date vaccine availability.
- If you get sick:
 - o and you are pregnant, or have a chronic medical condition such as diabetes, asthma or lung disease, heart disease, or weakened immune system, call your healthcare provider immediately to discuss potential anti-viral medication.
 - o stay home from work, and keep your children home from school. Do what is right for you, your family, and your community!
 - o Wash your hands frequently, and cover your cough with your elbow or sleeve.