



INYO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

A Division of Health & Human Services
Richard O. Johnson, M.D., MPH
Public Health Officer, Inyo County
760-914-0496
drrickjohn@gmail.com



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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“All I Want for Christmas is” – The H1N1 Flu Vaccine

Vaccine Availability:

Well, just in time for the holidays, Santa has arrived. The Health Department anticipates it has sufficient H1N1 vaccine for **all individuals up to age 65**. The supply is not unlimited, but we are comfortable releasing vaccine to this larger group of adults at this time. Up until now, we have focused on the highest risk groups, including pregnant females and children.

Vaccine will be available through the Health Department, and through providers and pharmacies who usually also give seasonal flu vaccine. There will be clinics in various settings around the county, and at the Health Department. Please call your provider or the Health Department at 760-873-7868, for more information.

Vaccine Safety:

Now that many millions of doses of the H1N1 vaccine have been given, data is beginning to accumulate, confirming that the H1N1 vaccine is very safe. Reported reactions show that this vaccine is just as safe as the seasonal influenza vaccine, which has an excellent track record over many years. The likelihood of having a problem similar to a previous “swine flu” vaccine in 1976 is now vanishingly remote (associated with an 8 to 10 fold increase in Guillan-Barre syndrome (GBS). In fact, the H1N1 illness itself seems to be associated with an increased risk of GBS - but not the vaccine.

Internet fraud:

There is no CDC 2009 H1N1 Influenza Vaccination Registry – The CDC does NOT require any registration on the Internet to receive a vaccine, and any e-mail suggesting it does is a fake that is looking for personal information that can be exploited illegally. For more information:

http://www.cdc.gov/hoaxes_rumors.html

H1N1 Influenza Activity:

National influenza activity continues to decrease but still remains elevated for this time of year. Twenty-five states including California continue to report “widespread” activity. Pneumonia and influenza deaths have remained above the epidemic threshold for the past nine weeks. In the last reporting week (ending Nov 28th), there were 12 deaths in California, for a total of 366 from the H1N1 virus to date.

Though declining, hospitalization rates continue to be highest in children 0-4 years old.

Twenty-six more children were hospitalized in California in the last reporting week, with 2 deaths. There have also been a total of 13 deaths among pregnant females to date.

Locally, we have seen approx a dozen persons hospitalized with pneumonia, influenza-like illness, and lab confirmed H1N1 infections, but there have been no deaths. Clinic visits and prescriptions for the antiviral drug Tamiflu are decreasing.

A Final Word of Caution:

Although influenza activity does appear to be decreasing, it may come in waves, especially with holiday gatherings. The cold weather keeps people in close quarters, breathing the heated dry air that the viruses thrive in. Even after the peak of activity, influenza viruses continue to circulate for months in the community, and people will continue to die! While pandemic H1N1 activity appears to be decreasing, we expect to see a rise in other respiratory viruses that normally appear during this time of year, including seasonal influenza and RSV.

So (I know, your mother told you all of this already!):

- **Get vaccinated as soon as possible – call 760-873-7868**
- **Wash your hands frequently, and stay away from sick people**
- **Keep your throat moist with lots of fluids, and get plenty of rest**
- **Stay home if you are sick, and keep your sick child out of day care or school**
- **If you are sick, think twice about going to that special party or family gathering**
- **Drink plenty of fluids (alcohol-free of course!), take ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol), and rest as much as possible**
- **Stay home until you are fever free for more than 24 hours**

Don't bring additional stress to the holidays by getting sick or infecting others. Don't let your guard down. Stay well!