

H1N1 Flu/Mass Vaccinations – Media Information

The New Mexico Department of Health has been planning for H1N1 vaccination clinics and updating emergency preparedness plans since H1N1 was first detected this spring. We are talking to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention weekly to get the latest information about what to expect in the fall and will pass on that information to the media and public when it is available.

As always, we will do our best to accommodate media needs during vaccination clinics and if H1N1 becomes more severe. Depending on the situation, we will arrange specific times for media briefings to meet your deadlines and provide information as soon as we have it.

When you do stories on flu, it would be helpful to include priority groups for getting vaccine, information on how people can protect themselves from influenza and where people can get vaccine. We will post updated H1N1 information, including press releases, radio and TV psas, and resources/links at our website: <http://nmhealth.org/flu/seasonal/h1n1.html>.

Vaccines:

- The Department of Health is working with providers throughout the state including hospitals, clinics, private providers and pharmacists, to provide vaccinations to protect people against the new strain of influenza (H1N1) and seasonal influenza. It is important to get protected against both strains of influenza.
- Each person should get two flu vaccines this fall: one for the regular (seasonal) flu and one for the H1N1 flu. The H1N1 flu may require two shots; the person giving you the first shot can tell you when to get the second H1N1 flu shot.
- CDC expects that the seasonal vaccine could be ready by late August/early September. H1N1 vaccine could be ready as early as mid-October, but may not be available until later in the fall/winter.
- We expect private providers will have a supply of seasonal flu vaccine. The Department provides vaccines to people who are uninsured and can't get care elsewhere.
- The Department is planning clinics statewide and will announce the dates, times and locations of clinics when they are scheduled. This information will also be available on the department's website: www.nmhealth.org.
- CDC expects that vaccine companies can produce adequate supplies of both vaccines.
- The priority groups for seasonal flu are the same as previous years and includes pregnant women and children 6 months to 18 years, health care workers, elderly people, people with chronic health conditions and household contacts of young children.
- CDC's Advisory Committee recently issued recommendations about priority groups for H1N1 vaccination. The recommendations target people who are the most likely to develop complications from H1N1 flu and or spread the disease to vulnerable individuals. They are:
 - Pregnant women
 - People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old

- Children and young adults age 6 months through 24 years
- Healthcare workers and emergency services personnel
- People age 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza
- CDC has released guidelines for schools and advises that it's best to keep schools open in most cases. Schools should make sure hand washing and tissues are available to students, and good hygiene is practiced. CDC also recommends getting all children vaccinated against the flu. The Department of Health follows the recommendations of the CDC while also considering what's happening locally. The Health Department and Public Education Department make decisions about school closures in conjunction with local districts.

Influenza illness:

- The severity of illness due to H1N1 influenza has not changed nationally or in NM from the spring. The illness has been mostly mild in New Mexico with one death in a 45-year-old woman from Sierra County who was at high risk for developing complications because she had end-stage liver disease.
- Nationally, health officials do not know whether H1N1 influenza or seasonal influenza will be more severe this fall, but the State is planning for the worst case scenario.
- The Department will look for H1N1 flu in the same way we do with seasonal flu. About 60 clinics and labs across the state are reporting weekly flu activity to the Department.
- If H1N1 cases increase in numbers or severity, there would likely be a multi-agency response that may include the Department of Health, Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, the Public Education Department and other departments as needed.

Reporting to the public:

- The State will not know about or report every flu case in the state because not all cases are reported to the Department, and often sick individuals do not go to their doctors or get tested for influenza when they do. The World Health Organization is asking countries to stop reporting individual cases of H1N1 because it is not an accurate number. CDC has stopped reporting individual cases.
- The Department will track H1N1 cases that result in hospitalization or death and will provide this information to the public. The Department releases case information by county, gender and age to protect patient identification. Investigating and gathering this information for each case can take time, and we may not have this information readily available.

Contacts:

For mass vaccination clinics, disease information, case reporting,

- Deborah Busemeyer, communications director at the Department of Health, 505-827-2619 (office), 505-470-2290 (cell). Deborah will be on leave starting mid-September through November.
- Chris J. Minnick, regional public information officer at the Department of Health in Las Cruces, 575-528-5197 (office), 575-649-0754 (cell). Chris will respond to all media calls for the Department of Health while Deborah is on leave.

For emergency preparedness/response:

- Beverly Allen, public information officer for Dept. of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Office: 505-476-0626, Cell: 231-7197

For school preparation/response:

- Beverly Friedman, public information officer for the Department of Education, Office: 505-827-6661, Cell: 505-795-0180

- Danielle Montoya, public information officer for the Department of Education,
Phone: (505) 476-0393, Cell: (505) 795-0182

Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

<http://nmhealth.org/h1n1/index.shtml>

Influenza Info

What are the symptoms of the seasonal flu?

The symptoms of seasonal flu include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue

What are the symptoms of the new H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 flu virus are similar to symptoms of seasonal flu. Predominant symptoms are fever, cough and/or sore throat.

Is this really serious?

H1N1 hasn't been around very long, so we can't say for sure. We're watching what happens in the Southern Hemisphere where they are having their seasonal flu and H1N1 right now. We are preparing for the worst-case scenario.

If you or a family member feels sick:

- Take your temperature; if you have a fever higher than 100°F, call your doctor for additional instructions.
- Stay at home, unless your doctor directs you otherwise. You should stay at home for 24 hrs after you don't have a fever without using fever-reducing medicines.
- Drink plenty of fluids (water is preferred; clear liquids, like ginger ale, Gatorade™, or Pedialyte™ can be okay, too). You don't want to get dehydrated.
- Follow the same recommendations if you are taking care of a sick person at home. Isolate the person in a bedroom, if possible, with a private bathroom.

What Everyone Should Know:

- Hold the handshake, keep the kiss: greet your friends with a smile, instead of a hug or a kiss, during flu season.
- Washing your hands is very important. Wash your hands after you use the toilet, blow your nose, and cough or sneeze. Wash your hands before you cook a meal. Washing your hands for 20 seconds, with warm water and soap, will help to kill the flu virus.
- Cover your cough: cough into your elbow or sleeve, instead of coughing into your hands.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you're not able to wash your hands with soap and water. Rub the hand sanitizer into your hands until your hands are dry.
- If you're sick, stay at home.
- Flu is spread person-to-person, mainly through coughing and sneezing.