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Vaccine supply rising – it's time for members of priority group to get vaccinated

Weekly H1N1 vaccine update for Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2009

Now that the H1N1 influenza vaccine is arriving steadily in Oregon, Oregon Public Health officials are urging everyone in the priority group to get vaccinated right away. Until recently, health care providers were focusing efforts on the highest risk people in the vaccine priority group, such as pregnant women and people with underlying health conditions. Now supply is large enough that officials want to make sure everyone in the priority group – including healthy children – get the vaccine.

“Our vaccine supply continues to increase so we are urging people in the priority group to get vaccinated now to keep from being sick during the holidays,” says Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., Oregon Public Health director. “It’s common for flu outbreaks to come in waves. Over the past few weeks hospitalizations due to H1N1 have decreased; this lull is a good time to make sure those in the priority group are protected in case we get another wave of illness,” says Kohn.

To help ensure that people can find vaccine, www.flu.oregon.gov has a vaccine locator that provides lists of clinics and pharmacies offering both H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine. People can also call the Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040.

(more)

The vaccine supply is increasing and soon state health officials expect to open up vaccinations to all who want it. "Right now we are focusing on the priority group, but as long as the vaccine supply continues to increase, I expect that soon we will have enough to open vaccinations up for everyone. We've just come through one big H1N1 wave and we want to prevent the next one by vaccinating as many people as we can," Kohn says

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that Oregon will receive another 126,208 doses by Dec. 11, which will bring the cumulative total to 891,716, enough to vaccinate nearly half of the priority group, and more is arriving every week. Demand for H1N1 vaccine has been higher than for seasonal flu vaccine in years past.

Since September 1 in Oregon, 1,263 people have been hospitalized with the flu; 62 people have died.

The priority group being encouraged to get vaccinated right away includes:

- pregnant women;
- children and young people aged 6 months to 24 years;
- people aged 24-65 with underlying health conditions;
- people caring for infants 6 months and younger;
- and health care, emergency, and frontline law enforcement workers.

For more information call the Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040 or visit flu.oregon.gov.

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