

Seasonal Flu & H1N1 (Swine) Flu

The leaves are starting to change colors, temperatures are dropping and school is back and session. With that said, fall is here and winter is soon to follow. Typically, we have only had to worry about Seasonal flu, but this year we are additionally concerned about H1N1 (Swine) flu. The Health Department wants to inform the public of the latest recommendations for both Seasonal flu and H1N1 flu.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have recommended that the Seasonal flu vaccine be distributed and administered earlier this fall. Typically, flu clinics are held late September –November. This year, seasonal flu vaccine clinics have already started.

The first Health Department clinic was held on Friday September 18, at St. Patrick's Church in Cato. The second of the two clinics will be held on Friday October 2, 9-11a.m. at BOCES located at 1879 West Genesee St. Rd. in Auburn. Additional Health Department flu clinics may be scheduled based on vaccine supply.

As is in previous years these clinics are for adults ages 18 and older. No appointment is necessary and there is no charge for people with Medicare Part B who bring their card to the clinic. The Health Department will bill Medicare Part B for the charges. Those not covered under Medicare Part B will be charged \$30 for a flu shot. Pneumococcal vaccines will be available for people with a doctor's prescription. The cost for the pneumococcal vaccine is \$45.

Individuals who do not attend a Health Department Seasonal flu clinic can receive the flu vaccine by contacting their health care provider or by attending a clinic hosted by local pharmacies. The Health Department Web site (<http://co.cayuga.ny.us/hhs/doh/index.htm>) has a listing of various seasonal flu clinics being held in the county.

As we prepare for the flu season we are also preparing for H1N1 (Swine) flu to spike again. The Cayuga County Health Department plans on hosting H1N1 (Swine) flu clinics once the vaccine is received. As of last Wednesday, the 2009 H1N1 vaccine is now a licensed vaccine. Initial doses of the vaccine are expected to be available in October. There are plans for wide distribution of the H1N1 vaccine to health departments, medical provider offices, hospital outpatient clinics and community health centers, pharmacies, school-based clinics, college/university health centers, and health care facilities.

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) made recommendations on who should receive the vaccine first. The target groups were determined by which groups had the most severe illness and risk for complications during the H1N1 outbreak earlier this year, which groups had the greatest frequency of illness and protection of the health care system functions.

The five initial target groups include:

- Pregnant women
- Persons who live with or provide care for infants aged <6 months
- Health-care and emergency medical services personnel
- Children and young adults aged 6 months – 24 years
- Persons aged 25-64 years of age who have medical conditions which put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications

Further information regarding availability of and eligibility for H1N1 (Swine) flu vaccine will be shared as it becomes available.

H1N1 never completely went away this summer and with school now back in session, we expect more cases. It is recommended that all school - aged children receive the H1N1 vaccine.

So far, H1N1 flu has been relatively mild and the symptoms of H1N1 flu in people are similar to the symptoms of regular (seasonal) flu and include:

- Fever greater than 100°F
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Chills and fatigue
- Some people have also reported diarrhea and vomiting.

Unlike a cold, with symptoms that come on gradually, flu usually hits all at once. If you are sick, you should stay home. Don't go to the Emergency Room unless you have severe or worsening symptoms. These may include; trouble breathing, pain or pressure in the chest or stomach, bluish skin, dizziness or confusion, vomiting that won't stop or worsening fever or cough.

Ways to protect yourself and your family:

1. Get vaccinated!
2. Take everyday preventive actions:
 - a. Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze.
 - b. Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
 - c. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
 - d. Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
 - e. If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home until your fever is gone for 24 hours.
 - f. While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

For more information you can visit the Cayuga County Health Department Web site: <http://co.cayuga.ny.us/hhs/doh/index.htm>, call the Flu Hotline number 253-1157 or call the Health Department at 253-1560.