



Nov. 3, 2009

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Weekly H1N1 influenza update for Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2009

The H1N1 influenza vaccine continues to arrive in Oregon with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) predicting an estimated cumulative total of about 327,700 doses by November 6, enough to vaccinate 16.7 percent of the priority groups.

"We have a plan to get through the flu season, no matter when the vaccine arrives," says Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, Oregon Public Health Division director. "We've been working on this plan for eight years. We are ready."

This is how the H1N1 vaccine gets to our communities:

- The H1N1 vaccine is produced by private drug manufacturers.
- The CDC then allocates available vaccine each week to the Oregon Immunization Program (OIP) on a per capita basis.
- The immunization program then allocates the vaccine to the local county health departments, tribes and state agencies, who in turn assign them to approved providers.
- A national distributor ships vaccines directly to providers. A few counties in Oregon receive the entire shipment at the county health department, and some then distribute the vaccine to providers from there. But most providers in Oregon receive the vaccine directly from the manufacturer.
- Providers determine when and where the vaccine will be administered to patients for whom it is recommended. Flu clinics are handled locally with the assistance of county public health departments. The decision of which priority groups will be served is made at the local level and may vary from clinic to clinic. People should call ahead to make sure that their priority group will be served. Priority groups include 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. In Oregon, priority groups account for about half the state's population.

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Because of the delay of vaccine, some flu clinics have been rescheduled and others are opening later than expected. The Oregon Public Health Division is surveying the counties on a regular basis and is keeping information as current as possible at flu.oregon.gov and the statewide flu hotline of 1-800-978-3040.

Kohn says vaccine availability is a national issue but, because the H1N1 flu season is expected to last well into the spring, the vaccine will be helpful whenever it arrives. Oregon Public Health has activated its emergency operations center full time to respond to H1N1 issues.

Since Sept. 1, 2009, 745 people in 30 counties have been hospitalized in Oregon with influenza-like illness; 20 people have died.

"We have systems in place to keep track of the virus in Oregon and can send resources to where they're needed," says Kohn.

In the meantime, he urges everyone to follow the personal prevention guidelines: Wash your hands, cover your cough and stay home when you're sick. For more information on H1N1 flu and vaccines, call the Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040 or visit www.flu.oregon.gov.

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Oregon Public Health Division mission: To protect and promote the health of all the people of Oregon.