



H1N1 Flu and You

September 2009

Update on H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Activity in Kansas

by Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips, State Health Officer and Director, KDHE Division of Health



For most people, the H1N1 flu has been relatively mild, but numerous Kansans have been hospitalized and two persons have died.

Summer flu activity in Kansas is unusually high. Based on recent experience in the southern hemisphere and in other parts of the U.S., it's likely an escalation of cases will occur in Kansas in the coming months.

We expect the H1N1 vaccine will be available sometime in October, but it could come sooner. The vaccine will be administered with preference given to people who fall within nationally established priority groups, which include:

- Healthcare personnel
- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- All children over 6 months of age and young adults through age 24 years
- People aged 25-64 years with high-risk health conditions

Ultimately, the H1N1 vaccine will be made available to all Kansans. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is coordinating with local health departments to plan a statewide vaccination campaign that involves private healthcare providers, primary care clinics and retail pharmacies – as well as schools and other mass vaccination sites – to begin when vaccine is available.

The spread of the virus in schools is of concern, with the average age of confirmed Kansas cases being 17. Approximately 80% of cases in our state have occurred in persons under 35 years of age.

Getting the H1N1 vaccine will not replace the need for vaccination against the seasonal flu. All Kansans,

particularly those traditionally at high risk for serious complications, are encouraged to receive a seasonal flu vaccination earlier than usual this year. Once administered, your seasonal flu vaccination will remain effective throughout this flu season.

In addition to the vaccine, the next best methods for preventing the spread of all flu viruses are:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to get rid of most germs, and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- If you become sick, stay home until at least 24 hours after fever or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications, in order to avoid spreading illness to co-workers and friends. This is very important for state employees, most of whom work in cubicle environments.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, and properly dispose of used tissues. If tissues are unavailable, cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve.
- Stay healthy by eating a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting adequate rest and exercise.

Infants, especially those 6 months and younger, are at greater risk of serious complications from H1N1 and other flu viruses if they become exposed. Be alert and stay clear of others who may be sick, cover coughs and sneezes, wash hands frequently, and stay home with the child if he or she shows any signs of illness.

State employees are encouraged to stay up to date as new information about the H1N1 flu pandemic becomes available. Add the KDHE website to your list of favorites: <http://www.kdheks.gov/H1N1/index.htm>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Eberhart-Phillips MD".

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