



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Health District continues to prepare for flu season

LAS VEGAS - The Southern Nevada Health District continues to plan for the upcoming influenza season, including the expected return of the novel H1N1 strain. With the beginning of the school year, the health district anticipates local outbreaks of influenza among children and other groups in close proximity. To date, there have been more than 250 laboratory-confirmed H1N1 cases in Clark County; however, the number of reported cases represents a small percentage of residents who have been infected with H1N1 as most do not seek medical care.

Updated information regarding H1N1 is available on the Southern Nevada Health District website, www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) site, www.cdc.gov.

Until adequate immunization rates for H1N1 are achieved, the best way to prevent influenza is to practice good health habits. This influenza season, two different flu immunizations will be available to protect against illness. There will a new H1N1 vaccine to protect against the new strain of H1N1 influenza A that will likely require two doses. There will also be a vaccine against the seasonal influenza strains that will require one dose for most people.

School Closures

The CDC recently revised its guidelines regarding school closures as a method to prevent the spread of H1N1 or any other type of influenza. In accordance with these new guidelines, Nevada guidance regarding school closures will assume schools will remain open following the confirmation of an H1N1 case among students.

Vaccine

The health district continues to work with the state health division to plan for an H1N1 vaccination program with special immunization clinics. The health district anticipates the first H1N1 vaccine shipments will arrive locally in mid-October, and additional shipments will continue to be received through the end of the year.

The initial shipments will have limited quantities and the health district will follow the CDC guidelines with regard to special, targeted groups. These are people who more frequently experienced severe illness or complications when infected with H1N1 influenza.

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Health District prepares for flu season – add one

As more vaccine becomes available, the health district anticipates that it will continually expand the number of people who will be eligible to receive the immunizations. The health district's seasonal flu supply, which is different, will be available sooner and in adequate supply for everyone.

The CDC estimates that the H1N1 vaccine will likely require two doses to provide full coverage. Initial groups that are encouraged to receive the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers or those who live with children less than six months old
- Healthcare workers and emergency response personnel
- Individuals between the ages of six months and 24 years old
- People between the ages of 25 and 64 with chronic medical conditions, compromised immune systems, and who are at a higher risk of complications from H1N1 infection

“H1N1 influenza continues to circulate in our community and it will remain with us this fall along with seasonal influenza. Initially, supplies of the H1N1 vaccine may be limited when we first receive them, so we will be asking the community's cooperation when we begin to roll out the vaccine program. We will work with our partners in the community as we hold special immunization clinics to vaccinate the first recommended groups,” said Dr. Lawrence Sands, chief health officer for the Southern Nevada Health District. “As soon as we are able to begin the program, we will let the public know which groups will be eligible and when and where the vaccine will be administered.”

In the event initial supplies of the H1N1 vaccine are limited, the CDC has recommended that the group of people recommended to be immunized first should be further limited to include:

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers or those who live with children less than six months old
- Healthcare workers and emergency response personnel
- Children between the ages of six months and 4 years old
- Children between the ages of five and 18 who have chronic medical conditions

As more vaccine supply is delivered, additional immunization clinics will be announced. The health district also reminds Southern Nevadans about the importance of getting the seasonal flu vaccine to protect against the other strains that will be circulating at the same time.

“Thousands of Southern Nevadans are affected by influenza every year, many people are hospitalized and some, sadly, die. Fortunately, a majority of people recover without seeking medical care,” said Sands. “Without specific tests, patients will not know whether or not they have seasonal flu or H1N1, so it is as important to get the seasonal flu shot as well. It is important that we remember that testing is not necessary for treatment. H1N1 is an influenza virus and is behaving like any other seasonal influenza strain.”

Seasonal influenza vaccine will be available communitywide through physicians' offices, clinics, and pharmacies. There are no anticipated shortages of seasonal influenza vaccine. People should contact their physicians or healthcare providers if they have any questions.

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Health District prepares for flu season – add two

Good Health Practices

The health district advises everyone to practice good health habits to prevent the flu. The CDC estimates that more than one million Americans have already been infected with the new, novel H1N1 influenza strain.

Current recommendations to the public encourage good health habits to minimize the spread of influenza:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you get sick with influenza, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.