

H1N1 Vaccine Arrives in Harrison County

Who should receive it?

For months, two primary questions about H1N1 influenza have been circulating. When will the H1N1 vaccine arrive and who should get it? The first question has been answered as shipments of the H1N1 vaccine begin arriving in Harrison County this week.

“Allocation of the vaccine to Harrison County is being determined by the state according to population,” said Harrison County Health Director Nicole Carritt “As a county, we then work with providers to administer the vaccine.” Vaccine will continue to be shipped to Iowa through the winter months.

As for who should receive the vaccine, Harrison County is following CDC guidelines, which state the H1N1 vaccine should first be made available to the following priority groups:

- pregnant women,
- people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age,
- health care and emergency medical services personnel who have direct contact with patients,
- persons between the ages of 6 months through 4 years of age, and
- children and adolescents aged 5 through 18 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications

As initial shipments of the H1N1 vaccine will be small Harrison County Home & Public Health is asking that people who fit into one or more of these categories call our office at 712-644-2220 or email our office at krife@harrisoncountyyia.org to leave your name, telephone number, date of birth, and the priority group you fit into so that we can call you when the appropriate type of vaccine is available. Once vaccine is available and we begin to use our call list we will ask some additional screening questions to ensure the vaccine we have is appropriate for you or your child. Walk-ins will be discouraged, as vaccine availability cannot be guaranteed due to the limited supply.

As quantities of H1N1 vaccine increase, the priority groups will be expanded to include a larger portion of the population. More information will be forthcoming as the situation, and vaccine availability continue to change.

Because the first shipment of H1N1 vaccine is in the form of a nasal spray, which is not recommended for some people (such as pregnant women and children with asthma), it is important to talk to your health care provider about getting the vaccination.

The seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine can be given at the same time and at any time in any sequence with one exception: if using the live nasal spray vaccine for both the seasonal flu and H1N1, they should be given 4 weeks apart to ensure the best protection from both vaccines.

Harrison County Home & Public Health along with the majority of other healthcare providers, local health departments, and private providers across the country continue to wait for shipments of seasonal flu vaccine. The delay in receiving that vaccine has occurred as the vaccine manufacturers have taken a focus to produce the H1N1 vaccine. Our agency is still awaiting approximately 1300 doses of seasonal vaccine from our suppliers. As soon as we receive shipments, we will be scheduling our seasonal flu clinics throughout the county as we have in years past. It's not too late, we typically do not start our seasonal flu clinics until mid-October each year, and they run through mid-November because in years past we have not seen seasonal influenza circulating until around December with activity peaking around late January, February or even later. Once seasonal flu clinics are scheduled flyers will be posted in the communities, the dates, times and locations will be posted in local newspapers, and the information will be available on our website <http://www.harrisoncountyyia.org/publichealth/index.html>.

In addition, it remains important to take personal actions to prevent the spread of the virus:

- Cover your cough,
- Clean your hands, and
- Contain germs by staying home when ill.

A statewide toll-free hotline has been established for public questions about seasonal and H1N1 influenza at 1-800-447-1985. More information can also be found at www.idph.state.ia.us.