

10/15/2009

Dear Parents/guardians:



As you have heard, a new influenza virus, called the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, was first identified in the United States in late April 2009. The virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and deaths in adults and children. Many children have been infected by the 2009 H1N1 virus and some schools in the United States have had large outbreaks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 as soon as the vaccine is available. Other groups recommended to get the first available doses of the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical services workers, and
- People ages 25 through 64 years who have certain health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious virus.

The Van Wert County Health Department is working with your school to make the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine available to all students. Healthcare providers will administer the vaccine to your child at a date and time convenient to the school, but during school hours. Vaccinations will be provided **free of charge**. The vaccine will not be available to adults in the school setting, only students. If you would like to be present when your child receives his/her vaccine, you are welcome to do so.

Beginning in the next few weeks, we will hold vaccination clinics. Your child's school will let you know the specific date once vaccine is on hand. It is uncertain at this time how much vaccine will arrive, and when, at the local Health Department. **As soon as we have sufficient amounts of vaccine**, clinic dates will be set. Children 9 years and younger will need two (2) doses of vaccine spaced at least 4 weeks apart. Currently, the 2009 H1N1 vaccine will be available in the following formats:

1. **Traditional injection** or "Shot" – vaccine that has "killed" virus in it. It is approved for use among persons 6 months of age and older, including those who have chronic medical conditions and pregnant females at any stage of pregnancy.
2. **H1N1 nasal spray** – contains live H1N1 viruses that have been changed so as not to cause the "flu". It is **sprayed into the nose** rather than injected into the muscle. It is approved for healthy children 2 years of age and healthy adults up to age 49 years of age, who are not pregnant. This option may be more appropriate for younger students in grades K-6.

IMPORTANT- Children who have certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, kidney disease, or a weakened immune system should not receive the H1N1 nasal spray, but should be vaccinated with the traditional injection (shot).

The vaccine consent form includes options allowing you to either accept or refuse the vaccination for your child. If you refuse, the vaccination will not be given to your child. A Vaccine Information Statement form for both types of vaccine is included with this letter.

We are asking you to take the following steps at this time:

1. **Pre-register your child to receive the H1N1 vaccine at <https://h1n1vaccine.odh.ohio.gov/> if you have internet access. Return this with your child's completed consent form.**
2. **Review the H1N1 Vaccine Information Statements forms**
3. **Complete and sign the H1N1 Vaccination consent form ([accept or refuse](#)) that we have provided**
4. **Return the completed consent form to your child's primary or homeroom teacher by October 26, 2009**

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, please call: 419-238-0808 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Please visit the CDC's 2009 H1N1 influenza web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> and also <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parentss> for information especially for parents. Please monitor the Van Wert County Health Department's website at www.vanwertcountyhealth.org for further updates locally. Please check your child's school website for additional links and information. Your child's health care provider also can answer your questions about the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus and may be able to give your child the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

Sincerely,
Van Wert County Health Department Staff