

Important Information Regarding the H1N1 Flu Vaccination

October 21, 2009

Dear North Putnam Community School Corporation Parent/Guardian:

As you may already know, the Putnam County Health Department is providing students an opportunity to receive a free vaccination against H1N1 influenza. The enclosed handouts provide important information regarding H1N1 vaccinations. Below, please find a summary of the enclosed information, and information about vaccination clinics:

- Vaccines are completely voluntary
- Vaccines are free
- Children are considered a “high priority” group by the Centers for Disease Control
- North Putnam Community School Corporation will serve as a host site for administering the vaccine (as will all school corporations in the county)
- Exact vaccination dates have not been set because the health department does not know when they will receive the vaccine
- The vaccine should arrive within the next couple of weeks
- Only students whose parents give **written permission** will receive the vaccine

North Putnam Middle and High School students:

- The vaccine will be given during school hours in the gymnasium at North Putnam Middle School.
- Parents may accompany their children to a separate evening session if they prefer.

Bainbridge and Roachdale Elementary students:

- Vaccines will be given during an evening session at North Putnam Middle School to allow parents to accompany their children.

Parents of all students:

- Should sign and return the consent form to their child’s school as soon as possible indicating whether or not you want your child to receive the vaccine.
- We will send home additional details once the clinic dates are confirmed.

The school corporation is simply facilitating the administration of this vaccine. If you have specific questions about the vaccine itself, please contact the Putnam County Health Department at 653-5210. If you have questions about how the school corporation will be helping with the process, feel free to contact me directly at 522-6218. In the meantime, you may refer to North Putnam Community School Corporation website for information about precautions to take to help prevent the spread of influenza and other viruses.

Thank you for your consideration about this important health matter.

Sincerely,

Kevin Emsweller
Assistant to the Superintendent
School Safety Specialist

2009 H1N1 INFLUENZA VACCINE

INACTIVATED
(the "flu shot")

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis.

1 What is 2009 H1N1 influenza?

2009 H1N1 influenza (also called Swine Flu) is caused by a new strain of influenza virus. It has spread to many countries.

Like other flu viruses, 2009 H1N1 spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing, and sometimes through touching objects contaminated with the virus.

Signs of 2009 H1N1 can include:

- Fatigue • Fever • Sore Throat • Muscle Aches
- Chills • Coughing • Sneezing

Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting.

Most people feel better within a week. But some people get pneumonia or other serious illnesses. Some people have to be hospitalized and some die.

2 How is 2009 H1N1 different from regular (seasonal) flu?

Seasonal flu viruses change from year to year, but they are closely related to each other.

People who have had flu infections in the past usually have some immunity to seasonal flu viruses (their bodies have built up some ability to fight off the viruses).

The 2009 H1N1 flu is a new flu virus. It is very different from seasonal flu viruses.

Most people have little or no immunity to 2009 H1N1 flu (their bodies are not prepared to fight off the virus).

3 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine

Vaccines are available to protect against 2009 H1N1 influenza.

- These vaccines are made just like seasonal flu vaccines.
- They are expected to be as safe and effective as seasonal flu vaccines.
- They will not prevent "influenza-like" illnesses caused by other viruses.
- They will not prevent seasonal flu. *You should also get seasonal influenza vaccine, if you want to be protected against seasonal flu.*

Inactivated vaccine (vaccine that has killed virus in it) is injected into the muscle, like the annual flu shot. **This sheet describes the inactivated vaccine.**

A **live, intranasal** vaccine (the nasal spray vaccine) is also available. It is described in a separate sheet.

Some inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine contains a preservative called thimerosal to keep it free from germs. Some people have suggested that thimerosal might be related to autism. In 2004 a group of experts at the Institute of Medicine reviewed many studies looking into this theory, and found no association between thimerosal and autism. Additional studies since then reached the same conclusion.

4 Who should get 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine and when?

WHO

Groups recommended to receive 2009 H1N1 vaccine first are:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical personnel
- Anyone from 6 months through 24 years of age
- Anyone from 25 through 64 years of age with certain chronic medical conditions or a weakened immune system

As more vaccine becomes available, these groups should also be vaccinated:

- Healthy 25 through 64 year olds
- Adults 65 years and older

The Federal government is providing this vaccine for receipt on a voluntary basis. However, state law or employers may require vaccination for certain persons.

WHEN

Get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available.

Children through 9 years of age should get **two doses** of vaccine, about a month apart. Older children and adults need only one dose.

5 Some people should not get the vaccine or should wait

You should not get 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine if you have a **severe (life-threatening) allergy** to eggs, or to any **other substance in the vaccine**. *Tell the person giving you the vaccine if you have any severe allergies.*

Also tell them if you have ever had:

- a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of seasonal flu vaccine,
- Guillain Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness also called GBS).

These may not be reasons to avoid the vaccine, but the medical staff can help you decide.

If you are moderately or severely ill, you might be advised to wait until you recover before getting the vaccine. If you have a mild cold or other illness, there is usually no need to wait.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women can get inactivated 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.

Inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines, including seasonal influenza vaccine.

6 What are the risks from 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, could cause a serious problem, such as a severe allergic reaction. But the risk of any vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

The virus in inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine has been killed, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

The risks from inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine are similar to those from seasonal inactivated flu vaccine:

Mild problems:

- soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given
- fainting (mainly adolescents)
- headache, muscle aches
- fever
- nausea

If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1-2 days.

Severe problems:

- Life-threatening allergic reactions to vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.
- In 1976, an earlier type of swine flu vaccine was associated with cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS). Since then, flu vaccines have not been clearly linked to GBS.

7 What if there is a severe reaction?

What should I look for?

Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

What should I do?

- **Call a doctor**, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell the doctor** what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask your provider** to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. Or you can file this report through the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling 1-800-822-7967.

VAERS does not provide medical advice.

8 Vaccine injury compensation

If you or your child has a reaction to the vaccine, your ability to sue is limited by law.

However, a federal program has been created to help pay for the medical care and other specific expenses of certain persons who have a serious reaction to this vaccine. For more information about this program, call 1-888-275-4772 or visit the program's website at: www.hrsa.gov/countermeasurescomp/default.htm.

9 How can I learn more?

- Ask your provider. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call 1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO) or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or www.cdc.gov/flu
- Visit the web at www.flu.gov



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



Vaccine Information Statement
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