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Weekly H1N1 influenza update for Tuesday, November 17, 2009

Since Sept. 1, 2009, 1,105 people have been hospitalized in Oregon with influenza-like illness; 40 people have died.

Based on data collected nationwide and in Oregon, while vaccine supplies are limited, public health officials are urging local health departments and tribes to target vaccine outreach to the people who are at greatest risk for hospitalization and death:

- Pregnant women;
- Children under 5;
- And people aged 5-64 with underlying health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes and cardio-pulmonary disease.

"If you have an underlying health condition, please contact your health care provider. The numbers are telling us that these folks are at an increased risk for H1N1 complications," says Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., Oregon public health director. "We want vaccine providers to get to those people first."

In addition, those who come in contact with the high-risk group — caretakers of infants under 6 months, health care workers and some emergency personnel — should seek out the H1N1 vaccine.

Healthy people 5 to 24 years old are being asked to wait for their vaccine until more is available. National and state data show that this age group does not have as high a risk of hospitalization as other groups.

Private drug manufacturers continue to ship the H1N1 influenza vaccine into Oregon, with more arriving each week. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has allocated another 85,746 doses to Oregon expected by Friday, Nov. 20, bringing the cumulative total to 528,155.

(more)

Public health officials emphasize that even while they're urging health care providers to focus vaccination efforts toward those at highest risk for H1N1, this is expected to be a short-term situation until more vaccine arrives.

"Right now, with limited vaccine, we encourage local health departments to focus on getting the vaccine to the members of the target group most at risk: young children, pregnant women and people aged 5 through 64 with underlying health conditions," says Kohn.

The Public Health Division surveys the counties on a regular basis and keeps public clinic information current at www.flu.oregon.gov and the Oregon Public Health flu hotline at 1-800-978-3040. As more H1N1 vaccine arrives, the local health departments will continue vaccinating the priority group until enough doses arrive to reach out to the general public.

For more information on H1N1 flu and vaccines, call the Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040 or visit www.flu.oregon.gov.

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