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Region IV Public Health
Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties
and Cowlitz Tribe

NEWS RELEASE

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National Influenza Vaccination Week: January 10 – 16 *Vaccinations for all encouraged as best way to protect against possible resurgence of H1N1*

National Influenza Vaccination Week (January 10 – 16) is a reminder that one of the best things you can do to protect your health in the New Year is to get your H1N1 vaccination if you haven't already received one.

Between April and mid-November, 47 million Americans caught H1N1 flu, more than 200,000 were hospitalized and nearly 10,000 died, including six in Clark County. (Additional Southwest Washington statistics are provided below.)

"Getting vaccinated is the single best thing you can do to prevent getting H1N1 flu. Also, the more people who get vaccinated, the greater the community's immunity to H1N1," said Dr. Alan Melnick, Health Officer for Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties.

Because H1N1 is a new virus, its course is unpredictable. "We shouldn't let down our guard. We could see another wave of this influenza and it's even possible the virus could mutate into something more serious," said Melnick.

The current H1N1 vaccine was made in much the same way as seasonal flu vaccine and has a similar safety record. "People who avoid flu vaccinations because of vaccine safety concerns should be aware that the health risks from getting the flu are considerably greater than possible risks associated with getting vaccinated," said Melnick. For more information on flu vaccine safety, see http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/vaccine_safety.htm.

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Vaccine is now easy to find and is available at provider offices, clinics, and pharmacies throughout Southwest Washington. Some locations offer free or low-cost vaccine. For more information, see www.flunewsswwashington.org.

Vaccine is especially recommended for people at highest risk of complications from H1N1 flu, including pregnant women, people ages 6 months to 24 years, and anyone between 25 and 64 years of age with certain chronic medical conditions. Because infants younger than 6 months cannot receive the vaccine, parents and caregivers should get vaccinated to prevent spreading flu to their infant children. Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel also should get vaccinated to protect patients and ensure continuity of medical services.

Parents and caregivers are reminded that children ages 9 and younger need to receive a second H1N1 vaccination if they have only received one. The second dose should be given at least 4 weeks after the first dose.

Although the vast majority of flu cases in the nation and the region have been H1N1 flu, seasonal flu could begin circulating more widely. Seasonal influenza typically peaks sometime in February or March. People who haven't received their seasonal flu shots are encouraged to contact their providers or pharmacies.

2009 H1N1 influenza: Southwest Washington statistics

- ***First case: May 8***
- ***First hospitalization: May 15***
- ***First death: Aug. 16***
- ***First antivirals from CDC stockpile arrive: April 2009***
- ***First vaccine shipped to Southwest Washington: Oct. 7***
- ***First public vaccine clinic for priority groups: Oct. 8***
- ***Priority restrictions lifted, vaccine available to everyone: Dec. 9***
- ***Total number laboratory-confirmed cases as of 1/4/10: 152 in Clark County; 29 in Cowlitz County***
- ***Total number of hospitalizations as of 1/4/10: 142 in Clark County; 27 in Cowlitz County***
- ***Total number of deaths as of 1/4/10: 6 in Clark County***

For more information, see www.flunewsswwashington.org.

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