

8-26-09 - Novel H1N1 and Seasonal Flu Update from Gerard Cody, Director of Public Health, Lexington, MA (PRESS RELEASE)

Since last spring, the Health Division, Fire Chief, Police Chief, Town Manager's Office, Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and other local emergency planning officials have been working with the Lexington School Department to make sure that a good line of communication exists so that teachers, parents and students understand what is expected due to the circulation of *Novel H1N1* influenza. We expect that there will be a vaccine for *Novel H1N1* available in mid - October. Two (2) vaccinations spaced at least twenty-one (21) days apart are required in order for it to be effective. When the vaccine is available, plans are in place to distribute the vaccine at public clinics to be held at Cary Hall, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue. Medical Reserve Corp volunteers, Office of Community Development, Health Division employees and others town officials will staff the clinics. Priority groups for those who should be vaccinated for *Novel H1N1* are pregnant women, family members of babies less than six months old, and health care workers. School age children are likely going to be in the next priority category.

The *Seasonal Influenza* vaccine will be targeted for residents at least fifty years of age, those under nineteen years of age and those residents with chronic illnesses. It appears that *Seasonal Influenza* vaccine will be available earlier this year and in larger quantities than usual. Residents in these categories are encouraged, to get a *Seasonal Influenza* vaccine as soon as they have an opportunity. The Board of Health and Office of Community Development, Health Division, will announce the availability of *Seasonal Influenza* vaccination clinics and *Novel H1N1* vaccination clinics in the local newspaper and on the website.

As of August 6th, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that people with influenza like illness (fever, cough and sore throat) can now return to normal activities twenty four (24) hours after the fever disappears (without the use of fever-reducing medications.) Fevers have been lasting from two (2) to four (4) days typically so the time one needs to stay out of work or school could be closer to three (3) to five (5) days instead of the mandatory seven (7) days as was practiced last Spring. This new rule applies to schools, camps and businesses, but DOES NOT APPLY to health care facilities where the stricter rule still applies. It is also highly suggested that the stricter rule apply in places such as day care facilities where very young susceptible individuals are present. If the disease turns out to be worse than we expect in the future, we may return to the seven-day rule. Residents need to remember that this situation changes all the time and we must be prepared to make the necessary changes.

Summary

The virus continues to act similarly to the regular seasonal flu virus and has not become anymore virulent than it acted last spring. There is no shortage or delay in production of the irregular seasonal flu vaccine. The Center for Disease Control has produced a H1N1 vaccine and drug companies are engaged in large-scale production. Keep in mind that there are steps that everyone can take to help prevent the spread of any

type of influenza: wash your hands, do not cough or sneeze into your hands, cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze with a tissue or use the crook of your elbow, don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth, clean surfaces that are touched often, stay home when you are sick, get plenty of sleep, exercise, fluids and good nutrition and avoid contact with people who are sick. Active surveillance of H1N1 educational campaigns will continue throughout the fall and winter said Gerard F. Cody, Health Director.

Upcoming Events

Flu: What You Can Do - Caring for People at Home Thursday, October 22, 2009 at Cary Hall 1605 Massachusetts Avenue from 6:00 PM to 7:30 PM

Learn about flu prevention, caring for someone with the flu, and preparing for flu season. It is also applicable to a pandemic situation where hospitals and clinics may already be at full capacity.

For More Information

Regular Updates will be posted on the Town Website. In addition, the Department of Public Health has A H1N1 Virus (Swine flu) hotline, which has been set up to help answer any general questions about the disease. Call 1-866-627-7968 and dial 1, or simply dial 211 to access the hotline. To receive a free copy of *Caring for People at Home, Flu ñ What you can Do*, please contact the Office of *Community Development, Health Division*, Gerard Cody, Health Director at 781-862-0500 x 237. You may also visit, www.cdc.gov/swineflu or www.mass.gov/dph/flu. The Lexington Board of Health brought this important message to you.

cc: File
Board of Health