



## A Message from the Whatcom County Health Department

The influenza season has arrived early this year. Typically, influenza outbreaks occur no earlier than mid December. This year, however, the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic ("swine flu") resulted in a very early flu season. While we are currently seeing people sick with H1N1 influenza, the seasonal flu remains a potential cause of illness for people. We are encouraging everyone to do their best to prevent BOTH H1N1 flu and the seasonal flu.

As you may know, flu can be easily spread from person to person. Any influenza—whether seasonal or 2009 H1N1, can be a serious disease for children of all ages. Flu can result in missed school days and activities or even hospitalization. The United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and doctors recommend **vaccination** as the **first and most important prevention strategy** for both seasonal influenza and H1N1 influenza.

### Seasonal Flu Vaccine

Seasonal flu vaccine is now available. You can receive the vaccine at your primary care provider's office or at a community clinic. A list of community flu clinics can be found at the Whatcom County Health Department website at [https://www.whatcomcounty.us/health/community/immunizations/pdf/flu\\_clinic\\_schedule.pdf](https://www.whatcomcounty.us/health/community/immunizations/pdf/flu_clinic_schedule.pdf)

Seasonal flu vaccination is especially important for people at higher risk of serious flu complications. This includes young children, caregivers of children under six months, women pregnant during the flu season, people with chronic health conditions, and people 65 years and older. **Seasonal flu vaccination is recommended for all children aged six months to 18 years.**

### H1N1 Flu Vaccine

H1N1 flu vaccine will be available in mid to late October. It will be available at private physician offices, pharmacies and at community vaccination clinics. There will be public notices when the vaccine is available in our community. These notices will also provide specific information on who has priority to receive the vaccine.

Because of all of the publicity about the H1N1 flu vaccine clinical trials, many people think the H1N1 vaccine is experimental. ***The H1N1 vaccine is NOT an experimental vaccination.*** The clinical trials have been conducted to ensure that the vaccine will protect different people of different ages against the H1N1 virus. Results from the trials have been very encouraging and have demonstrated that the vaccination is effective for most people in preventing H1N1 influenza.

H1N1 flu vaccination is especially important for people at greatest risk for 2009 H1N1 flu infection including children, pregnant women, caregivers of children under six months and people with chronic health conditions. **H1N1 flu vaccination is recommended for all children aged six months to 24 years.**

For more information visit <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/health/h1n1/>.