



October 19, 2009

Dear Parent,

The Howard County Health Department (HCHD) has begun to receive doses of H1N1 vaccine – in the form of FluMist® and injectible vaccine. As the vaccine comes in, it will be administered as soon as possible to those most vulnerable to the H1N1 flu, including children ages 6 months through 24 years old. The Health Department is working closely with the school system to administer the vaccine, free of charge, to any HCPSS student with parent permission. The vaccine is expected to be more readily available by November.

HCHD and the school system have devised a tentative schedule of H1N1 flu vaccine clinics, beginning with schools that have the highest enrollment. This schedule is posted on the school system's website, at www.hcpss.org/pandemic. The schedule simply lists the order in which schools will receive the vaccine and not specific dates, because we do not know how much vaccine will be available at any given time.

FluMist® will be administered to elementary students; injectible vaccine will be administered to middle and high school students. HCHD officials expect to receive more injectible vaccine than FluMist®. If or when FluMist® is no longer available, injectible vaccine will be offered to elementary students at after-school clinics, so that parents can accompany their child. Elementary school students with asthma or other chronic health problems may not be eligible to receive the FluMist, so parents may wish to consult with their child's physician about injectible vaccines.

It is the HCHD's priority to vaccinate as many students as soon as possible. This may result in changes to the posted schedule. If only a small shipment of vaccine is available at a particular time, a school with a smaller enrollment may receive vaccine earlier. Conversely, students at schools that have received the seasonal FluMist® will be delayed if the 30-day waiting period between vaccines has not occurred.

Parents will receive notification and a consent form when their child's school is next in line to receive the vaccine. A child will not receive the vaccine without a signed parental consent form.

Please note: Health officials recommend that children under 10 years old receive a second dose of the H1N1 flu vaccine, which may not be administered in schools. The HCHD hopes to provide after-school clinics for second dose administration, but this is tentative. Although a second dose is not required, it is recommended to increase immunity in younger children. Parents of children under age 10 may wish to consult with their child's physician about getting the second dose of the H1N1 vaccine.

Look for vaccine updates from your school, through HCPSS News, and on the school system's website. The school system will continue to provide information as soon as it becomes available. Your flexibility and cooperation are appreciated as we work to provide the vaccine to our school-aged population as quickly and efficiently as possible. Questions may be directed to the Howard County Health Department at 410-313-6503.

Sincerely,

Donna Heller, RN, MHSA, CSN
HCPSS Health Services Coordinator