

9-17-09

As anticipated, influenza season has arrived in our community. We have parent reported cases of influenza at most every school in the area. As of 9-17-09, the number of absences is not considered high but we are seeing about twice as many absences due to influenza-like symptoms as compared to last year.

At this time, it is not significant which particular influenza virus is circulating in our area. We need to take the same preventative measures during all influenza seasons. It's true that the H1N1 virus appears to be more contagious than the "seasonal" influenza but that is because it is a new strain of virus and our bodies have not yet had the chance to build immunity against the H1N1 virus.

The reason we need repeated "seasonal" flu vaccination every year is because the influenza virus is known to frequently change as it moves around the world. The next season's flu vaccine production needs to anticipate these changes and be formulated slightly differently every year. Most of us benefit from boosting our immune system by vaccinating for influenza yearly.

Seasonal influenza vaccinations are available in our community now and H1N1 will be available for persons in the identified "vaccine priority groups" by mid-October. Vaccine priority groups include pregnant women, children age 6 months to 24 years, adults 25-64 who have chronic medical conditions, health care and emergency workers, and those who live in households where there is an infant less than 6 months of age. Please call your health care provider for more details.

Thank you for your continued efforts to keep your child home when ill, has a fever of 100 degrees or higher, reporting specific symptoms when your child is absent, encouraging good hand washing practices and covering their coughs and sneezes.

Kathe Reed-McKay