



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Department of Public Health



Office of the Secretary of Public Health

Pedro T. Untalan, MHA
Acting Secretary of Public Health

Ref. # PR-H1N1-09-05
October 22, 2009

PRESS RELEASE

The Department of Public Health Receives the First Batch of the 2009 H1N1 Flu Vaccines

The Department of Public Health (DPH) received 2400 doses of the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) this week. The first batch of vaccines is targeted for pregnant women and health care and emergency service workers. Vaccination of this target group is scheduled to start November 3rd, 2009.

Closed Points of Dispensing (POD) sites will be set up to vaccinate health and emergency medical workers while pregnant women will need to receive their vaccine through their primary health provider.

Pregnant women will need to see their health provider within the last 4 weeks in order to receive the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. Vaccines will be available at all private clinics and public health clinics listed below.

Department of Public Health Clinics:

1. Women's Clinic at CHC
2. Southern Community Wellness Center in San Antonio
3. Tinian Health Center
4. Rota Health Center

Private Clinics:

1. Pacific Medical Center

2. Medical Associates of the Pacific (Dr. Ada's Clinic)
3. Saipan Health Clinic
4. Marianas Medical Center
5. FHP
6. Dr. Hocog's Clinic

The target groups who will receive the first batch of vaccines are part of the CDC priority group. Other individuals in the priority group will be receiving their vaccines in the next few weeks. A school-based vaccination program is also aimed to start in December 2009.

Priority Groups:

- a. Pregnant women
- b. Health care and emergency service personnel (to include EMS, Fire, and DPS).
- c. Individuals 6 months through 24 years old
- d. Individuals with chronic health conditions age 25 through 64 years old
- e. Adults, children, and teens who are household contacts or caregivers of infants younger than 6 months (including Day Care contacts and caregivers).

Identification of the priority groups was based on the decision of the Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP) committee who made recommendations on the use of vaccine for the control and prevention of the 2009 H1N1 flu. The committee considered several factors, including current disease patterns; who is most at-risk for severe illness, hospitalization or death; how much vaccine is expected to be available; and when the vaccine is expected to be available.

The committee recommended that vaccination efforts focus on the five key populations listed above. The key populations include those who are at higher risk of disease or complications, those who are likely to come in contact with 2009 H1N1, and those who could infect young infants who cannot be vaccinated themselves. The ACIP has recommended that when the 2009 H1N1 vaccine becomes available, immunization programs and providers should focus first on vaccinating as many people as possible in the priority groups.

More vaccines will be arriving in the CNMI in the next few weeks although the actual number of doses is unknown. The Department of Public Health (DPH) will be releasing guidance to the public about the 2009 H1N1 vaccination program as information becomes available.

According to Mariana Coats, the Immunization Program Manager, the CNMI will be receiving enough vaccines to have the general public vaccinated with the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.

However, at this time, DPH urges pregnant women to contact their primary health providers to learn more about the H1N1 vaccine.

Getting vaccinated is the single best way to protect against the H1N1 flu virus and an important factor in minimizing the risk and severity of H1N1 infection. Presently, the CNMI has 71 laboratory-confirmed H1N1 cases and it is expected that the illness is widespread in our community.

The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is expected to have a similar safety profile as seasonal flu vaccines, which have very good safety track records. The CDC expects that any serious side effects following vaccination with the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine would be rare. The types and frequencies of side effects from the H1N1 vaccine will likely be similar to those experienced following seasonal flu vaccines which are mild, localized reactions.

Individuals who are allergic to eggs or who have experienced serious reactions after receiving a previous dose of the seasonal flu vaccine are not recommended to get the H1N1 vaccine. These individuals should contact their health provider to learn more.

The Department of Public Health asks the general public who want to receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine to be patient as the vaccination program begins. It is voluntary to get the H1N1 vaccine and those interested in vaccination for themselves or their children will receive accurate information about the vaccine and the vaccine's benefits and risks through the media, the schools, the workplace, and other outreach approaches so they can make informed decisions.

To learn more about the flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine, visit www.flu.gov or contact the Department of Public Health at 234-8950 or via email at cnmipheoc@gmail.com .