

To: Health Care Providers
From: Wendy Davis, MD, Commissioner of Health

H1N1 Vaccine Supply Now Open to all Vermonters Age 6 Months and Older

People at high risk for serious illness still the focus of the state's vaccination effort

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BURLINGTON, VT – The Vermont Department of Health today announced that there is now enough vaccine in the state to begin offering it to anyone older than 6 months who wants to be vaccinated against the 2009 H1N1 flu.

Until now, vaccine had been limited to those at greatest risk for serious illness from the new flu – pregnant women, children age 6 months through 24 years, older people through age 64 with medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease, caregivers of babies too young to be vaccinated, health care and emergency medical services personnel.

“We’ve made good progress in our vaccination effort so far, and we continue to focus on meeting the needs of those people at greatest risk from H1N1 flu,” said Health Commissioner Wendy Davis, MD. “But now is a good time for many more people, such as adults age 65 and older, who have been waiting so long to get vaccinated.”

Although health officials say the vaccine supply will not be immediately plentiful at every public clinic and provider office, there’s much more vaccine available now – with more to come.

As of Dec. 15, nearly 180,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine had been received in the state, nearly half of Vermont’s expected allocation. More than 106,000 doses have been administered at hospitals, health care provider offices, schools and colleges – and at public clinics organized by the Vermont Association of Home Health Agencies.

“We very much appreciate the diligent and collaborative effort on the part of health care providers, hospitals, schools and our partner agencies to reach the priority groups designated by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and we’ll continue to provide vaccine to serve these groups,” said Dr. Davis. “The school clinics have been an unprecedented and tremendously successful undertaking, and we are reserving enough vaccine to complete these clinics on schedule.”

All “first dose” school clinics will be completed by mid-January, with second dose clinics for children younger than 10 due to be completed by the end of January.

“H1N1 flu illness is lessening in the state, but there is still plenty of flu around and we don’t yet know whether 2010 will bring another wave of more intense illness. We hope that everyone – especially those most at risk for serious illness and life-threatening complications – will make time to get the protection that only vaccination can give.”

Increasingly larger shipments of vaccine in the past several weeks, with much more to come throughout the month of January, enabled the Health Department to expand the vaccination effort. Health officials expect that nearly all the vaccine destined for Vermont will be in state by the end of January.

Anyone seeking vaccine for themselves or children are advised to check with their health care provider or their child’s school. Or, to locate a public clinic, go to www.healthvermont.gov or dial 2-1-1.

The 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine is free and, just like seasonal flu vaccine, it comes in two forms: the flu shot and the nasal spray. Where available, anyone age 2 through 49 who is healthy and not pregnant should take the nasal spray vaccine.

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