

October 7, 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian:

A new influenza virus, called the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, was identified in the United States last spring. The virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and deaths in adults and children. Many children have been infected by the 2009 H1N1 virus and some schools in the United States have had large outbreaks.

In order to limit the spread of the virus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1, as soon as vaccine is available. Other groups recommended to get the first available doses of the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical services workers, and
- People ages 25 through 64 years who have certain health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious virus.

South Western School District has partnered with the York Adams Metropolitan Medical Response System (YAMMRS) to make the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine available to all students. Qualified healthcare providers will administer the vaccine to your child at a date and time convenient to the school, but during school hours. Vaccinations will be provided **free of charge** to students returning a completed parent consent form. The vaccine will not be available to adults in the school setting, only students. Currently, the 2009 H1N1 vaccine will be available in the following formats:

1. **Traditional injection** or “Shot” – prepared from pieces of dead H1N1 viruses that, once injected, will trigger the immune system to create antibodies to attack the H1N1 virus. It is approved for use among persons 6 months of age and older, including those who have chronic medical conditions and pregnant females at any stage of pregnancy.
2. **H1N1 nasal spray** – contains live H1N1 viruses that have been changed so as not to cause the “flu”, but help the body make antibodies to attack the H1N1 virus. It is **sprayed into the nose** rather than injected into the muscle. It is approved for healthy children 2 years of age and older and healthy adults up to 49 years of age, who are not pregnant. This option may be more appropriate for younger students in grades K-6.

IMPORTANT! – Children who have certain chronic medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, kidney disease or a weakened immune system should **not** receive the H1N1 nasal spray, but should be vaccinated with the traditional injection.

In anticipation that the vaccine will be available from the Pennsylvania Department of Health in mid-October, please read the enclosed 2009-2010 Vaccine Information Sheet (VIS) to learn about the benefits and potential side effects of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine. In addition, please review, complete and sign the enclosed parent consent form needed for state vaccination reporting. **The consent form should be returned to your child's primary or homeroom teacher by October 16, 2009.** All questions must be answered and the forms signed for your child to receive the vaccine. If you do not wish for your child to receive the vaccine, simply do not return the parental consent form. Students who do not receive the vaccine in the school setting will have the opportunity to attend a community immunization site at a later date. The dates, times and locations of these community immunization sites will be listed on the H1N1 Information Center (www.yammrs.org).

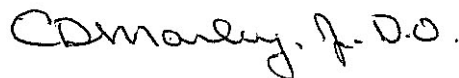
Currently, the CDC is recommending that children, 9 years of age and younger, receive two (2) doses of the H1N1 vaccine a minimum of 28 days apart. If your student is in this age range, YAMMRS will schedule the second round of vaccinations once students in all school districts have had the opportunity to receive their 1st dose of vaccine.

Please consider this opportunity for your child to be protected from the 2009 H1N1 virus. If you have any questions about the vaccine, please contact your child's healthcare provider, or visit the following websites: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>, <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents> or <http://www.h1n1inpa.com>.

Sincerely,



Superintendent
South Western School District



Charles D. Marley, Jr., D.O., MHA
Chair, YAMMRS

2009 H1N1 INFLUENZA VACCINE

INACTIVATED

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Many Vaccine Information Statements are available in Spanish and other languages. See www.immunize.org/vis.

1 What is 2009 H1N1 influenza?

2009 H1N1 influenza (which was earlier called Swine Flu) is a type of flu caused by a new strain of influenza virus. Because it has spread to many countries, it has been declared a pandemic influenza strain.

Like other flu viruses, 2009 H1N1 spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing, nasal secretions, and sometimes through handling objects contaminated with the virus.

Signs of 2009 H1N1 can include:

- Fatigue
- Fever
- Sore Throat
- Muscle Aches
- Chills
- Coughing
- Sneezing

Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting.

Most people recover within a week. But some people get pneumonia or other serious illnesses. Some people have to be hospitalized and some die.

2 How is 2009 H1N1 different from regular (seasonal) flu?

Seasonal flu viruses change from year to year, but they are closely related to each other.

People who have had prior flu infections usually have some immunity to seasonal flu viruses.

The 2009 H1N1 flu virus is a new virus strain. It is very different from seasonal flu viruses.

Most people have little or no immunity to 2009 H1N1 flu.

3 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine

Vaccines are being made to protect against 2009 H1N1 influenza.

- These vaccines are produced just like seasonal flu vaccines.
- They are expected to be as effective as seasonal flu vaccines.

- They will not prevent “influenza-like” illnesses caused by other viruses.
- They will not prevent seasonal flu. *You should also get seasonal influenza vaccine, if recommended.*

Inactivated (killed) vaccine is injected into the muscle, like the annual flu shot. **This statement describes the inactivated vaccine.**

A **live, intranasal** vaccine is also available. It is described in a separate statement.

Some inactivated H1N1 vaccine contains a preservative called thimerosal. While some people have suggested that thimerosal may be related to developmental problems in children, that theory has not been supported by research. Thimerosal-free vaccine is also available.

4 Who should get 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine and when?

WHO

Groups recommended to receive 2009 H1N1 vaccine first are:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency personnel
- Anyone from 6 months through 24 years of age
- Anyone from 25 through 64 with certain chronic medical conditions or a weakened immune system

These groups should also be vaccinated:

- Healthy 25-64 year olds
- Adults 65 and older

WHEN

Get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available.

Recommendations may change if we learn that other groups of people are at particularly high risk.

Some people may need **two doses** of vaccine.

5 Some people should not get the vaccine or should wait

You should not get 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine if you have a **severe (life-threatening) allergy to eggs**, or to **any other substance in the vaccine**. *Tell the person giving you the vaccine if you have any severe allergies.*

Also tell them if you have ever had:

- a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of seasonal flu vaccine,
- Guillain Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness also called GBS).

These may not be reasons to avoid the vaccine, but the medical staff can help you decide.

If you are moderately or severely ill, you might be advised to wait until you recover before getting the vaccine. If you have a mild cold or other illness, there is usually no need to wait.

Pregnancy or breastfeeding are **not** reasons to avoid getting 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine.

2009 H1N1 vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines, including seasonal influenza vaccine.

6 What are the risks from 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, could cause a serious problem, such as a severe allergic reaction. But the risk of any vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

The virus in inactivated 2009 H1N1 vaccine has been killed, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

The risks from 2009 H1N1 vaccine are expected to be similar to those from seasonal flu vaccine:

Mild problems:

- soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given
- fainting (mainly adolescents)
- headache, muscle aches
- fever
- nausea

If these problems occur, they usually begin soon after the shot and last 1-2 days.

Severe problems:

- Life-threatening allergic reactions to vaccines are very rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot.
- In 1976, an earlier type of swine flu vaccine was associated with cases of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS). Since then, flu vaccines have not been clearly linked to GBS.

7 What if there is a severe reaction?

What should I look for?

Any unusual condition, such as a high fever or behavior changes. Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include difficulty breathing, hoarseness or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heart beat or dizziness.

What should I do?

- **Call** a doctor, or get the person to a doctor right away.
- **Tell** the doctor what happened, the date and time it happened, and when the vaccination was given.
- **Ask** your provider to report the reaction by filing a Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) form. Or you can file this report through the VAERS website at www.vaers.hhs.gov, or by calling **1-800-822-7967**.

VAERS does not provide medical advice.

8 Vaccine injury compensation

The Federal government is providing this vaccine for receipt on a voluntary basis. However, state law or employers may require vaccination for certain persons.

If you or your child has a reaction to the vaccine, your ability to sue is limited by law.

However, a federal program has been created to help pay for the medical care and other specific expenses of certain persons who have a serious reaction to this vaccine. For more information about this program, call **1-888-275-4772** or visit the program's website at www.hrsa.gov/countermeasurescomp/default.htm.

9 How can I learn more?

- Ask your provider. They can give you the vaccine package insert or suggest other sources of information.
- Call your local or state health department.
- Contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):
 - Call **1-800-232-4636 (1-800-CDC-INFO)** or
 - Visit CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu or www.cdc.gov/flu
- Visit the web at www.flu.gov



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