

H1N1 Fact Sheet – October 27, 2009

Background:

With flu season on us, it's a good time to remind everyone of precautions to take in order to best protect ourselves and the children, youth and families we work with.

A vaccine for the H1N1 strain has recently been made available to high-risk populations. As of October 26, 2009, the people who will most benefit from the H1N1 vaccination, and who need and want to get vaccinated will be able to receive the vaccine. These groups include:

- Persons under the age of 65 with chronic conditions
- Pregnant women
- Persons – including First Nations people - living in remote and isolated settings or communities.

People who fall into these groups AND for whom the seasonal flu vaccine is normally recommended will be able to receive both shots at the same time. People who do not fall into these groups are asked to put off receiving the H1N1 vaccine for a few weeks to allow those at most risk to get their vaccine first.

Starting the week of Nov. 2, the people eligible to receive the H1N1 vaccine will expand to include the following groups:

- All initial groups
- Children 6 months to less than 5 years of age
- Health care workers
- Household contacts and care providers of infants less than 6 months of age, and persons who are immunocompromised

People who fall into these groups AND for whom the seasonal flu vaccine is normally recommended will be able to receive both flu shots at the same time.

Beginning 3-4 weeks later, everyone else who needs and wants the H1N1 vaccine will be recommended to receive it. Public notification will happen at this time so that everyone is aware the vaccine is available to them.

Do children in care need to get the H1N1 vaccination?

Yes, as a rule all children in care should receive the H1N1 vaccine as well as the seasonal flu shot if they normally receive that shot. There may be rare exceptions where a child's physician recommends against the child receiving the vaccine. These exceptions should be communicated to the child's foster parent/caregiver and noted in the child's file.

1. Where a director has guardianship of a child in care

Where a worker has guardianship of a child in care, the worker should ensure that foster parents/caregivers have flu shots administered to children in their care unless a physician advises that an H1N1 vaccination is not advisable for the child. In accordance with sections 47 and 94 of the *Child, Family and Community Service Act*, foster parents/caregivers have authority to consent to routine medical care for a child in their care, including consenting to administering flu vaccines.

2. Where a child is in care by agreement

If a child is in care by agreement, unless other arrangements for medical consent have been made, the child's parent will need to consent to administering the flu vaccine. All reasonable efforts are made to obtain the parent's consent to administer the flu vaccine. If the parent/guardian refuses to provide consent, the child is not vaccinated and the refusal to provide consent noted on the child's file.

3. Youth's right to consent to or refuse treatment under the *Infants Act*

There is no legal age of consent for health care in B.C. Under section 17 of the *Infants Act*, children and youth under the age of 19 years can legally consent to or refuse health care, including flu vaccines, on their own behalf if they demonstrate capability and understanding of the nature and consequences of providing or withholding consent. The youth's right to consent to or refuse treatment cannot be overruled by the youth's parent or guardian.

Do foster parents need to get the H1N1 vaccination?

Foster parents and their family members, like all British Columbians are encouraged to take advantage of available flu vaccines when they are available and recommended to get them.

Foster parents and caregivers are also urged to take all precautions to safeguard their health and the health of children in their care. Universal health precautions such as frequent hand washing, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and avoiding close contact with people who are sick are steps everyone can take to help prevent the spread of H1N1.

Further Information

For further information on the H1N1 virus, including the location of a local flu clinic, visit:

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/h1n1/>