

Free H1N1 Flu Vaccine to be offered at Southern Boone Schools.

A new influenza (flu) virus, called the 2009 H1N1 flu virus, was identified in the United States in late April 2009. This virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and deaths, in adults and children. Large outbreaks have occurred in school districts around the country, where many children have gotten the 2009 H1N1 flu. While we encourage everyone to be vaccinated, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices strongly recommends that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against 2009 H1N1 flu as soon as the 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 worker, and
- People age 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 disease. We are working with your child's school to give the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine to children at their school. Vaccination clinics will be held this fall and you will be notified by your school of the dates once the vaccine is available. **Prior to the clinics you will receive a permission form to complete. If you refuse, or if you do not return the required permission form, the free H1N1 vaccine will not be given to your child at school.**

Children 9 years of age and younger will need two doses of vaccine, spaced about 4 weeks apart. Children 10 years of age and older will only require one dose of vaccine. The opportunity to get your child vaccinated is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. Additional information regarding the illness and the vaccination will be provided to you along with the permission form. There will be no cost for this vaccine.

If you have questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, you may contact your school nurse or the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services at 573-817-6438. The following websites can provide you with more information about the flu and flu vaccine:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents>
- www.FightTheFluMO.com

Your child's health care provider can also answer your questions about the 2009 H1N1 flu virus. He or she may be able to give your child both the seasonal flu vaccine and the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. Contact your child's health care provider directly to discuss vaccine availability at their office.

Sincerely,

Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services