

November 13, 2009

Pandemic H1N1 flu virus update

Dear Parents, Staff members and Volunteers,

Peel Public Health has re-opened their H1N1 vaccine clinics upon arrival of more vaccine on Nov 11th. Vaccination of priority groups continues to be the focus. On Nov 13, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care announced an expansion of the priority group to include school aged children and individuals 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions. As more vaccine is received, the Ministry will continue to expand the H1N1 immunization program. It is expected that there should be enough vaccine for everyone who needs and wants it by the end of the year.

Priority groups for H1N1 vaccination include:

- People with chronic medical conditions (asthma, diabetes, heart, lung or kidney disease or those receiving treatments for cancer or other illnesses that might affect the immune system) and their caregivers
- People who live with infants under 6 months of age, immuno-compromised people and those who cannot be vaccinated
- School aged children
- Firefighters and police officers
- Front-line institutional corrections workers and youth facility workers
- Health care workers

Pregnant women and those who have children aged 6 months of age to one year should contact their doctor to see if he/she can provide vaccine. If not, they should call Peel Public Health at 905-799-7700 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine. These vaccinations will be administered through special Peel Public Health clinics and specific family doctor offices. Visit www.peelregion.ca for H1N1 clinic information.

Before you attend a clinic, please note:

- **Children under 14 years of age need consent from their parent/legal guardian to get the H1N1 vaccine.** Children under 14 years of age require a **signed H1N1 consent form** from their parent/legal guardian in order to receive the vaccination. These consents are available at the clinics and/or a copy of the H1N1 vaccine consent form may be downloaded from www.peelregion.ca. A letter/note from a parent providing written permission for their child to receive the vaccine **will not** be accepted at the clinic.

- **Do not attend a H1N1 vaccination clinic if you think you have the flu. Wait until you are better to get vaccinated.** Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Stay home from school or work and limit contact with others if you are sick.

If parents or their children are ill:

- Consult the provincial self-assessment tool available at www.peelregion.ca
- If you have mild to moderate flu symptoms, visit a temporary Flu Assessment Centre (see below for details)
- If you are sick with the flu, you can also call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000, visit your doctor's office or a walk-in clinic
- Call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department, if you have extreme shortness of breath, chest pain, prolonged fever, continuous vomiting or diarrhea

The Region of Peel has opened two Flu Assessment Centres this week. The centres are open from 3:00pm – 10:00pm daily at:

- Mississauga: Frank McKechnie Community Centre, 310 Bristol Rd E.
- Brampton: Century Gardens Recreation Centre, 340 Vodden St. E. @ Rutherford Rd.

Flu assessment centres are temporary clinics open to people with flu-like symptoms that are unable to see their own doctor or a doctor at a walk-in clinic. A health assessment and treatment options to manage their flu will be provided. The H1N1 vaccine will not be provided at these centres.

In addition to getting the H1N1 vaccine, the best ways to reduce the risk of becoming ill or spreading flu viruses include:

Wash your hands frequently: Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after you cough or sneeze.

Practise good hygiene: Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve or elbow. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are spread this way.

Stay Healthy: Eat healthy foods, stay physically active and get adequate rest to keep your immune system strong.

For more information on the H1N1 flu virus, visit www.peelregion.ca or call 905-799-7700, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to speak to a health professional.



Eileen de Villa, MD MBA MHSc CCFP FRCPC
Associate Medical Officer of Health