



## SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

1109 North Jackson Street  
Albany, Georgia 31701-2022  
(229) 430-4599 Fax (229) 430-5143 Emergency 888-430-4590  
[www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org](http://www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org)

October 13, 2009  
For immediate release

Contact: Carolyn Maschke, Public Information Officer  
229-430-1969, 229-357-0257; [cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us](mailto:cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us)

### Southwest Health District opens H1N1 nasal-spray vaccine to more priority groups

Beginning this week, the 14 county health departments in Southwest Health District will begin offering H1N1 nasal-spray vaccine to healthy children 2 to 24 years old; people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age; and healthcare and emergency medical services personnel with direct patient contact.

“These are priority groups identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the state to be offered the first doses of H1N1 vaccine because they are either at greater risk of complications if they catch the disease or because they have close contact with individuals at risk of complications from it,” said Southwest Health District Health Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant.

They can also take the nasal-spray flu vaccine, also known as LAIV for ‘live attenuated influenza vaccine,’ which is made with live, weakened flu viruses. It is only for healthy people ages 2 to 49.

“Once we begin receiving H1N1 flu shot vaccine, we will broaden our target groups even more,” Grant said. “For example, pregnant women are one of the highest priority groups for H1N1 vaccination, yet they should not receive the nasal-spray form of the vaccine,” she said.

Neither should people with asthma or other chronic medical conditions, people who have compromised immune systems or people on certain medications such as steroids.

“We got the nasal-spray first because it can be produced more quickly than the flu shot, but the CDC said flu shot vaccine is now being shipped out as well, so we hope to get some shortly,” she said.

“Vaccine is being shipped as soon as batches are ready, which means we are getting small amounts that trickle in over time rather than large shipments scheduled for a particular date.”

The United States has never undertaken such a massive and complicated vaccination effort before, Grant noted. “We are asking the public to bear with us as we work through this process. By November, our understanding is that there will be ample supplies of H1N1 vaccine for everyone who wants to get it.”

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth

As more vaccine arrives, mass vaccination clinics, including school-located vaccinations, may be offered in the District, she said.

H1N1 vaccine is being provided free of charge by Public Health, although administration fees may be charged to Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance.

Private providers are also beginning to offer H1N1 vaccine. The State Department of Community Health's Web site, [www.health.state.ga.us/h1n1](http://www.health.state.ga.us/h1n1), lists the providers.

"This vaccine is made by the same manufacturers in the same way at the same facilities as regular seasonal flu. No corners were cut in its production. It is safe and effective. The vaccine is our best protection against pandemic H1N1 influenza," Grant said.

Although the flu has been widespread in Southwest Georgia and throughout the United States, disease investigators studying it say only 5 to 10 percent of the population has been infected.

"That leaves 90% to 95% of the population that's still susceptible," said Grant. "We know that historically pandemics come in waves. So even though we may have weathered the first wave of H1N1, we should be prepared for another one. Vaccination is our best tool to reduce the impact of influenza."

Meanwhile, she said, residents should continue to follow practices that help reduce the spread of infectious disease.

"Wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer regularly," Grant said. "Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze. Stay home when you are sick. And get vaccinated against seasonal flu."

More information is available by calling local county health departments, by going online to [www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org](http://www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org) or by calling the District's toll-free Flu Hotline at 800-829-2255.

###

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth