

Ulster County Weekly H1N1 Update - Summary Released: 11 –Dec. 09

- Influenza Like Illness (ILI) in Ulster County has decreased significantly in the past week when compared to the previous week however; it still remains high for this time of year.
- Many public health officials anticipate another wave of illness this coming winter or spring. This may coincide with the traditional flu season or result in a prolonged flu season.
- Therefore, it is important to continue to do all we can to protect ourselves from getting ill with the flu, even during the periods of low disease activity between the waves. Vaccination is among the most important prevention available.
- While the supplies of injectable vaccines are still increasing, supplies of the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) or nasal spray vaccine are readily available. LAIV is a safe and effective vaccine option for persons aged 2-49 years who are otherwise healthy and not pregnant. It is a weakened live virus vaccine, which cannot cause influenza.
- Colleges in Ulster County have also received vaccine, and students are encouraged to get vaccinated through their college/university vaccination clinics. We recommend those who did not have an opportunity to be vaccinated during the fall semester receive the vaccine before returning to school.
- It is recommended by county, NYS, and federal health authorities that if thimerosal-free vaccine is not available, pregnant women and children less than 3 years of age should not wait to get immunized. Waiting could allow for exposure to influenza disease and could result in more serious illness and complications.
- Governor David A. Paterson announced on December 10, 2009 in a press release that, “effective immediately, health care providers may make the H1N1 flu vaccine available to all New Yorkers who want the vaccine, including those who are not in priority groups established by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The announcement applies to all providers, including local health departments with vaccine clinics scheduled for this weekend.”
- The Ulster County Health Department plans to offer free H1N1 vaccinations at five locations throughout the county the week of December 14-18th. All dates have been announced. No appointments are necessary. Clinics are open to all New Yorkers six months and older who want the vaccine. **If the school district is closed due to weather related conditions, the clinic will be cancelled.**

For additional information about H1N1 and updates, visit our website at: www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health or call seasonal flu hotline: 340-3093. Also visit <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/> to see if there are any flu vaccine clinics scheduled at locations near you or call NYS DOH Hotline 1-800-808-1987.

**Ulster County Health Department
Seasonal and H1N1 Influenza Advisory
Update 12/11/09**

Influenza Monitoring:

Influenza Like Illness (ILI) in Ulster County has decreased significantly in the past week when compared to the previous week however; it still remains high for this time of year. While most Ulster County residents with flu are experiencing mild to moderate illness, the number of residents hospitalized due to more severe illness or complications continues to remain at higher levels compared to what is usually expected for this time of year. The majority of residents hospitalized with flu also have pre-existing underlying medical conditions. Emergency Departments reported significant decreases in the number of patients seen with (ILI) last week. Absenteeism from ILI appeared to peak in Mid-November in Ulster County schools and has steadily decreased since that time. Ulster County Health Department (UCHD) is continuing to monitor influenza activity on a daily basis.

Nationally, a few seasonal influenza strains have begun co-circulating at low levels with the 2009 H1N1 influenza strain. However, seasonal flu viruses have not yet been detected in NYS this flu season, only the 2009 H1N1 strain. Thirty-two states, including New York State, are reporting widespread influenza activity; a decline of 11 states over last week.

History teaches us that we need to be prepared for another wave of increased disease activity, although it is difficult to predict the exact pattern that each pandemic will take. Many public health officials anticipate another wave of illness this coming winter or spring. This may coincide with the traditional flu season or result in a prolonged flu season. Therefore, it is important to continue to do all we can to protect ourselves from getting ill with the flu, even during the periods of low disease activity between the waves. Vaccination is among the most important prevention available.

Status of Prevention Efforts:

Flu Vaccination Information:

Ample Supply of LAIV: While the supplies of injectable vaccines are still increasing, supplies of the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) or nasal spray vaccine are readily available. LAIV is a safe and effective vaccine option for persons aged 2-49 years who are otherwise healthy and not pregnant. It is a weakened live virus vaccine, which cannot cause influenza.

Students Home For the Holidays: Colleges in Ulster County have also received vaccine, and students are encouraged to get vaccinated through their college/university vaccination clinics. We recommend those who did not have an opportunity to be vaccinated during the fall semester receive the vaccine before returning to school.

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Availability of Thimerosal Free: The NYSDOH has determined that there will be insufficient supplies of thimerosal-free vaccine available this flu season. It is recommended by county, NYS, and federal health authorities that if thimerosal-free vaccine is not available, pregnant women and children less than 3 years of age should not wait to get immunized. Waiting could allow for exposure to influenza disease and could result in more serious illness and complications. Also note, that the CDC, Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) have extensively reviewed the published research on thimerosal and found it to be a safe product to use in vaccines.

New Vaccine Eligibility- 6 Months & Older: Governor David A. Paterson announced on December 10, 2009 in a press release that, “effective immediately, health care providers may make the H1N1 flu vaccine available to all New Yorkers who want the vaccine, including those who are not in priority groups established by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The announcement applies to all providers, including local health departments with vaccine clinics scheduled for this weekend.”

In the same press release, State Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D., noted: “While we know there are still some individuals in priority groups waiting to receive the vaccine, and we urge providers to continue to administer the vaccine to them, our discussions with local health departments, hospitals and other health care providers indicate a general consensus that it is now time to open access to the vaccine to non-priority group individuals as well.”

Ulster County Public Vaccination Clinics: The Ulster County Health Department plans to offer free H1N1 vaccinations at five locations throughout the county the week of December 14-18th. No appointments are necessary. Clinics are open to all New Yorkers six months and older who want the vaccine. **The clinics will be held as follows:

Monday, December 14	3:30-9:30 pm	Edson Elementary School 116 Merilina Avenue Kingston, New York 12401
Tuesday, December 15	3:30-9:30 pm	New Paltz Middle School 196 Main Street New Paltz, New York 12561
Wednesday, December 16	3:30-9:30 pm	Saugerties High School 310 Washington Avenue Saugerties, New York 12477
Thursday, December 17	5:00-9:00 pm	Ellenville Elementary School 28 Maple Avenue Ellenville, New York 12428
Friday, December 18	5:00-9:00 pm	Bennett Elementary School

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If the school district is closed due to weather related conditions, the clinic will be cancelled.

Information regarding clinics can be found in the following ways: United Way's free telephone service, 211 or 1-800-899-1479; flu hotline 340-3093; websites: www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health or www.flucliniclocator.org.

**Plans are subject to change depending on the supply of H1N1 flu vaccine.

Where to Find Vaccine: If your provider has not ordered H1N1 vaccine, and does not plan to order H1N1 vaccine, call the Ulster County Health Department Flu Hotline at 845-340-3093 or log onto www.UlsterCountyNY.gov/health to get updated information about when vaccination clinics for the general public will be held. You can also check <http://www.flucliniclocator.org/> to see if there are any flu vaccine clinics scheduled near you.