

Second Round of Mass Flu Clinics to Begin December 7

(Little Rock) – The second round of statewide mass vaccination clinics designed to immunize Arkansans against both seasonal and H1N1 influenza will begin next Monday (December 7), the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) announced today.

The unprecedented effort will continue through December 18. During the two-week period, clinics will be held in nearly every county, according to Randy Lee, Director of ADH's Center for Local Public Health.

The clinics will be administering H1N1 vaccine to everyone—not just priority groups at risk for serious complications from H1N1 flu--while supplies last, including children needing second shots for full protection, Lee said.

The dates, times, and locations of the upcoming mass flu clinics are posted on the ADH Web site, www.healthylarkansas.com.

There is no charge for the vaccine. Persons choosing to be vaccinated at the clinics sponsored by ADH are asked to bring their health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, or ARKids First cards so ADH can file with their insurance providers.

Lee said the decision to open the upcoming clinics to all comers was made because “it appears that we will have adequate H1N1 vaccine to offer to everyone and substantial amounts of seasonal vaccine to offer also.”

The second round of clinics follows the most ambitious vaccination effort in Arkansas history earlier this fall. Thousands more individuals have been vaccinated at school clinics in districts throughout the state. These will continue, as previously scheduled, until schools recess for the holidays.

Children less than 10 years old should have a second H1N1 shot and children less than 9 years old who have never before been vaccinated for the seasonal flu should have a second seasonal flu shot. The first and second shots should be given at least four weeks apart.

The H1N1 vaccine is produced in the same manner as regular seasonal flu vaccine and in the same manufacturing plants. The H1N1 vaccine simply contains a different strain of influenza virus. Reactions to all flu vaccines may include a mild soreness or redness near the site of the shot and perhaps a little fever or a slight headache. A flu shot cannot give you the flu.

However, a few persons--individuals with a severe allergy (i.e., anaphylactic allergic reaction) to hens' eggs and individuals who previously had onset of Guillain-Barre

syndrome--should not receive flu vaccinations for health reasons. Additionally, infants less than 6 months old cannot be vaccinated.

The symptoms of seasonal and H1N1 flu are the same. Symptoms include fever greater than 100 degrees, headaches and body aches, coughing, sore throat, chills, fatigue, respiratory congestion, and, in some cases, diarrhea and vomiting.

Both H1N1 and seasonal flu are highly contagious. Each is easily spread from person-to-person through coughing or sneezing or by touching a hard surface with the virus on it and then touching the nose or mouth.

According to ADH, people can best avoid catching the flu by remembering the three C's:

- Clean—properly wash your hands frequently
- Cover—cover your cough or sneeze
- Contain—contain your germs by staying home if you are sick

To avoid spreading the flu, persons who are sick should limit their contact with others and remain at home until they feel better and until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medications.

Complete flu information is available on the ADH Web site, www.healthyarkansas.com , or by calling 1-800-651-3493.