

Are you ready?

What to do about H1N1

What will H1N1 mean for Kossuth County? Are we headed for an outbreak of pandemic proportions or will a single case be confirmed? These questions and many others have all been raised, as Kossuth Regional Health Center Public Health nurses prepare for the seasonal influenza season and H1N1.

“One of the challenges in planning for this fall was how to fully prepare for H1N1 when so many questions are still out there. Most cases occurring in the United States have been mild, but we need to be ready in case that changes as we do know that certain people are at greater risk for serious complications and even death if they are infected with H1N1,” said Dixie Meyer of KRHC Community Health.

According to a media briefing by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services on Sept. 3, 2009, two of the target groups most at risk for serious complication from H1N1 include pregnant women and small children, especially children with an underlying disability such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or long-standing respiratory or cardiac problems.

“H1N1 is a cause for concern



Tara Marso receives her annual seasonal flu shot from Dixie Meyer in KRHC Community Health. The seasonal flu vaccine is available at community based clinics and after hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the KRHC clinic from 5 to 7 p.m. The H1N1 vaccine is expected to be ready by mid to late October. For more flu information go to the KRHC website at www.krhc.com.

because it's a new virus...a strain we've never seen before so people don't have immunity to it. Although we still have many questions about H1N1, we do know that it is spread from person to person, just like the seasonal flu,” Meyer said. “If you cough or sneeze near another person or touch a common area like a doorknob and then touch your nose

or mouth, you may pick it up. This is why practicing healthy habits is so important. Washing your hands, coughing into your sleeve, staying home when you are sick...these simple steps can make a great difference in stopping the spread of both seasonal flu and H1N1.”

Prevention is the first step in dealing with H1N1. Public health

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KRHC Community Health ready for flu season

Preparations include September flu vaccinations

Kossuth Regional Health Center public health officials say they are ready for the coming flu season. "We are working closely with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)," said Dixie Meyer of KRHC Community Health. "On the local level, we are coordinating with schools and businesses to keep residents healthy and minimize the potential impact of the flu."

There are many things area residents can do to protect themselves, their families, and their communities from the seasonal and H1N1 influenza virus. Meyer says residents should

For the latest information:

- KRHC Community Health hotline at 515-295-4451
- Iowa Department of Public Health website at <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>

receive the seasonal influenza vaccine now and, if appropriate, get the H1N1 vaccine when it is expected to become available by mid-October.

Upcoming flu vaccine clinics include:

- Monday, September 21 from 7 to 10 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church in Algona and from noon to 1 p.m. at the Titonka School.
- Tuesday, September 22 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the KRHC Clinic in

Algona

- Thursday, September 24 from 8 to 8:30 a.m. at NSK Sentral, noon to 1 p.m. at NSK Swea City and 3 to 6 p.m. in the Bancroft EMS Room. The KRHC Clinic in Algona will also offer vaccines from 5 to 7 p.m.

The Tuesday and Thursday night walk in flu vaccine clinics will continue at the KRHC Clinic in Algona until October 1. For all clinics, no appointment is necessary.

If you plan to bill the vaccine to insurance, please bring a copy of your insurance card. Cost of the vaccine is \$27 for flu shots and \$45 for flu mist.

In addition to getting your flu vaccine, it's important to remember the three Cs:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Contain germs by staying home when ill.

A statewide toll-free hotline has been established for public questions about seasonal and H1N1 influenza at 1-800-447-1985. More information can also be found at www.idph.state.ia.us.

Questions and answers about this year's flu

Question: What is novel H1N1 flu and why is there so much concern about it?

Answer: The novel influenza A (H1N1) virus is a unique, never seen before strain of influenza virus. It is currently circulating in the U.S and other parts of the world. It's a cause for concern because it is a new virus and no one has immunity to it. Like the seasonal flu, H1N1 can cause severe illness and even death, but different groups of people may be at greater risk of getting ill.

Question: What are the symptoms of H1N1?

Answer: The symptoms are very similar to those of the seasonal flu and can include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have diarrhea and vomit.

Question: Will the seasonal flu vaccine protect me from H1N1?

Answer: No. The seasonal flu vaccine is designed to protect you from a specific strain of the influenza virus.

Question: Can you get novel H1N1 flu from eating or preparing pork?

Answer: No! The novel H1N1 flu



virus is not spread by eating or preparing pork or pork products. Eating properly handled cooked pork products is safe.

Question: How is H1N1 spread?

Answer: It's spread from person to person, just like with the seasonal flu. It can be spread by coughing or sneezing on or near another person, or sometimes by touching something, such as a door knob, and then touching your mouth or nose. This is why hand washing is so important.

Question: What can people do to protect themselves against H1N1?

Answer: Follow the three "C's" of good health. Clean your hands with soap and water, or use a hand sanitizing gel when water is not available. Cover your coughs and sneezes with your sleeve or elbow and confine yourself to your home when ill. Don't go to school, work, shopping, or other outside activities when you are sick.

Question: Who is most at risk for getting infected by the H1N1 virus or most at risk for complications?

Answer: People aged five to 24 are

most at risk for getting infected. Those who are at the highest risk to suffer from complications from the virus include:

- Children younger than 4 years of age
- Pregnant women
- People of any age with chronic medical conditions (such as heart, lung or kidney disease) or who are immunosuppressed (taking certain medications or infected with HIV)

These target groups will likely receive the H1N1 vaccine first, along with health care workers, daycare providers and school age children.

Question: Is there a vaccine for novel H1N1 flu?

Answer: A vaccine is being developed and tested. Public health officials anticipate it will be available in mid to late October. In the meantime, all Iowans are urged to get their seasonal flu vaccine, follow good hygiene practices and follow recommendations for receiving the H1N1 flu vaccine when it becomes available.

Here's what to watch for: symptoms of flu

Symptoms of H1N1 are very similar to that of the seasonal flu. According to the Center for Disease Control, common symptoms of H1N1 include fever, headache, fatigue, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, diarrhea and vomiting. Although the CDC anticipates that most people will recover without medical attention, those who are severely ill should contact their healthcare provider.

Some populations are at higher risk for complications from H1N1. Warning signs that a child might need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or difficulty breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or not interacting
- Being so irritable that the child

does not want to be held

- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Adults can also suffer complications from H1N1. Watch for these warning signs that an adult may need urgent medical attention:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen

- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough

If you feel that you may have some symptoms of H1N1 contact your health care provider.

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officials advise all Iowans to follow the three "C's" of covering your cough by using a tissue or your upper arm, cleaning your hands with soap and water or a hand sanitizer and containing germs by staying home when sick.

"During the regular cold and flu season you'll hear people talk about social distancing. This is when you make an intentional effort to stay physically away from other people in order to help slow the spread of disease. Sometimes this will play out by not shaking hands, or passing the peace, during worship service or staying a few feet away from those who appear to be ill," Meyer said.

If you are within close proximity of someone who is sick, try to stay at least six feet away from that person, and consider wearing a facemask if you must be close to that person.

In addition to following healthy habits listed above and staying home when sick, getting the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available is another key method to prevention. A vaccine for H1N1 is being developed and it is anticipated to be ready by mid to late October.

"At this time we are still learning how much vaccine we will have locally. Those at the greatest risk will receive the vaccine first. Once the demand for vaccine for the prioritized groups has been met we'll work towards vaccinating others who meet

the eligibility requirements as determined by the CDC and the Iowa Dept. of Public Health," Meyers said.

The priority groups will likely include pregnant women, caregivers and household contacts of children less than six months of age, health care and emergency medical services personnel, people between the ages of 6 months through 24 years and people ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk for novel H1N1 because of chronic health disorders or compromised immune systems.

"You are most likely to spread the infection to others one day before you experience symptoms to five to seven days after the onset of illness. People should stay home for 24 hours after a fever is gone, without the help of fever-reducing medication," said Meyers.

Kossuth Regional Health Center and the CDC define a "temperature" as 100.4 degrees or higher.

Another key step for prevention of both the seasonal flu and H1N1 is to stay informed.

"Information is changing all the time and we have been participating in regular meetings and updates about what to expect for H1N1 and the regular influenza season. Checking the KRHC website and following the links for the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control will help people stay up to date, or people can call the KRHC flu hotline at 515-295-4451," Meyer said.

Seasonal Flu Clinics 2009

Thurs. Sept. 24	8 –8:30 am	NSK – Sentral Bldg. – community (staff & students to follow)
	12-1 pm	NSK – Swea City – Community (staff & students)
	2:30 pm	Bancroft St. John's – (staff & students)
	3-6 pm	Bancroft EMS Rm.

Beginning September 15, 2009, the Algona KRHC clinic will be offering walk-in seasonal flu clinics on Tuesday and Thursdays after clinic operating hours from 5 to 7 p.m. This will be the only opportunity to walk-in for flu vaccinations. These clinics will be held through October 1 or until vaccine runs out.

Consent forms are available @ www.krhc.com

- Minimal waiting for those who their consent form filled out prior to arrival. You must have a copy of your insurance card attached to the form.

Cost: Flu shots are \$27.00 (ages 6 months and older)
FluMist is \$45.00 (healthy, ages 2-49 yrs.)
Medicare: Medicare Part B covers flu shots. You must bring your Medicare card or a copy.
Wellmark Advantage Plan through Blue Cross is the only Medicare HMO that can be billed for flu shots; people with other Medicare HMO's will need to pay the \$27.00 fee.
Private health insurance: insurance will be billed by KRHC if you have verified that your policy will pay for flu shots and/or FluMist. You **MUST** bring a copy of your insurance card. If your policy denies payment, you will be billed for the flu vaccine you received.
Children 6 months to 18 years who have no health insurance or insurance that doesn't pay for flu vaccine: Flu vaccine is supplied through the VFC program for an administrative fee of \$14.00.
Title 19 adults: Persons age 19 and older with Medicaid must go through the KRHC walk-in flu clinics for Title 19 to pay for their flu vaccine.

