

September 15, 2009

## ***Parents, help prevent the spread of flu!***

Flu can be spread easily from person to person, and the health department is working closely with schools and day care centers to monitor flu conditions. We are working together to reduce the spread of flu but we need your help.

### **Here are things that you and your children can do to help prevent the flu:**

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water**, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also work.
- **Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.** If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or shoulder, not into your hands. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as germs are spread this way.
- **Know the signs and symptoms of the flu.** Look for possible signs of fever, such as if person feels very warm, has a flushed appearance, or is sweating or shivering. Other symptoms may include cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Sometimes people also have diarrhea and vomiting.
- **Get vaccinated for both "usual" and H1N1 flu.**
  - Some people are at higher risk for complications from the flu and it is especially important that they get the vaccine. People at high risk include pregnant women and those with medical conditions such as asthma, heart disease, or diabetes.
  - It is also very important that very young children (six months to five years) get the vaccine because they are more likely to become very sick and need medical or even hospital care.
  - H1N1 flu vaccine should be available in October.

### **If you or your children have the flu or a flu-like illness:**

- **Stay home for at least 24 hours after fever has passed** without the use of fever-reducing medications. Young children with illness should not be in child care and students need to stay home from school, sports practices, and games.
- **You don't need to have a lab test or take antiviral medicine.** If your child has the flu now, it is very likely that it is H1N1 flu. Testing for H1N1 flu is necessary only when patients are sick enough to be hospitalized or have severe illness. Antiviral medications are not recommended except for people at higher risk for complications or with severe illness.
- **You don't need to see your doctor unless you have unusually severe illness.** Most people experience and recover from H1N1 flu just as they do from "usual" flu.
- **Children don't need a note from a doctor to return to school or child care** after they are well again. Also, there is no reason for employers to request a doctor's note for teens and adults who are returning to work. Writing notes takes away valuable time from patients who need immediate medical care.

**For more information, go to [www.kingcounty.gov/health/h1n1](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/h1n1) or call the Flu Hotline at 1-877-903-5464**