



PRESS RELEASE

Local and National Update on H1N1 Influenza

LaPorte, IN (December 2, 2009) - The LaPorte County Health Department provides this update on H1N1 influenza nationally and locally:

While H1N1 infections seem to be dropping, but the number of children who died with the illness rose by about 30, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report released Monday, November 30th.

Widespread infections of H1N1 influenza were reported in 32 states as of Nov. 21, down from 43 states the week before, CDC officials said.

The CDC also said that last week brought the largest number (27) of new lab-confirmed H1N1 deaths in children under 18 since the virus was first identified last April. The total is now up to 200 children. To date, H1N1 influenza has sickened an estimated 22 million Americans, hospitalized about 98,000 and killed 4,000. It has proven to be similar to seasonal flu but, rather than primarily attacking older people, H1N1 is a bigger threat to children and young adults.

The Indiana State Department of Health stated that, as of Monday, November 23rd, 15.7% of the estimated number of "high risk" persons in Indiana have received the H1N1 vaccine, including 21.8% of pregnant women and 40.1% of health care and EMS workers. A total of 564,094 H1N1 vaccines have been given in Indiana, and 61% of those were given to persons from 6 months to 24 years of age.

In late October, 48 states reported widespread flu activity. Since then, fewer states have been reporting widespread cases, and the number of school closings due to swine flu has at times dropped to zero.

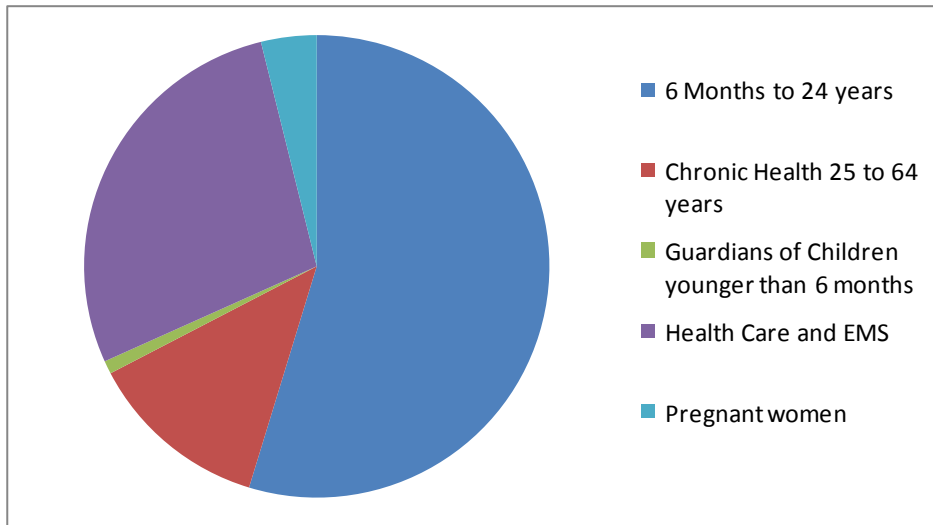
However, the number of people who go to Indiana emergency departments at hospitals and clinics remains significantly higher than in the past three years.

Percent of Patients Who Came to Emergency Dept with influenza-like illness

	Ave. of 2006-08	2008- 2009 season	2009- 2010 season
October - Week 40	1	<1	7
October - Week 41	1	<1	12.5
October - Week 42	1	<1	13
October - Week 43	1	<1	10
November - Week 44	1	<1	8
November - Week 45	1	<1	6.2
November - Week 46	1	<1	4

Source: Indiana State Department of Health, Weekly Influenza Report. Data as of Monday, November 23. (CDC Week 46)

In LaPorte County, Paul Trost, Health Department Administrator, said, "As of Monday, November 30th, we had inoculated 19,941 people in the CDC's targeted at-risk groups with the H1N1 vaccine."



"But," Trost continued, "we still have a lot of sick people in LaPorte County and across the country. The CDC estimates that the number of people who currently have H1N1 virus may be as many as during the worst days of regular flu seasons. The CDC officials have also said that the declining number of cases does not necessarily mean the worst is over."

CDC spokesman Tom Skinner recently said, "We won't be surprised if we see another uptick later this year or early next year when kids return to school from Christmas break." A post-holiday increase happened during the 1957 flu pandemic that is being studied as a possible model for what's going on now with the novel H1N1 flu, Skinner noted.

Trost said, "We share the CDC's concerns about Christmas break and the potential for spreading the H1N1 influenza virus. We have scheduled vaccine clinics at all county high schools and universities in the next few weeks, prior to the holiday break from classes, and we are vaccinating children in as many as two elementary schools every day."

"In addition," Trost said, "we have scheduled a free vaccine clinic at Kesling Middle School this Saturday, December 5th, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. CST for the at-risk groups. Beginning Wednesday, December 9th, we will host free walk-in vaccine clinics for at-risk groups at both the LaPorte and Michigan City Health Department offices from 1pm to 7pm every Wednesday."

Monday's count of nationwide children's deaths represents cases reported in the week ending Nov. 21. While there have been about 200 deaths reported, officials believe there are probably a few hundred more that have not yet been reported as death statistics can lag behind the spread of an illness.

"The message we are trying to get to the public is this," Trost concluded. "The H1N1 influenza pandemic is not yet over. Health Departments across the country are intent upon vaccinating the at-risk groups and then everyone else who doesn't fit into those categories. We strongly urge people in our own county who are in an at-risk group to get vaccinated. Yes, this has been primarily a mild disease, but it has resulted in several cases where county residents have had to be put on respirators, and we have had two deaths here. H1N1 influenza is a virus to be taken seriously, and the Health Department is doing all we can to educate our residents about the risks of the disease. To date, the CDC has not had any reports of serious side-effects from the vaccine, and it does not expect to receive any. Health officials across the world are saying, "Don't get the flu. Do not be a person who spreads this flu. Get vaccinated and help us to protect the people who are most at risk for serious complications of this disease...our young adults and children."