

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

Graham Health Center offers free H1N1 vaccines for students

By **Dave Groves**, staff writer

As anticipated, flu activity is spreading rapidly in Michigan. Based on reporting from the Michigan Disease Surveillance System and other public health monitoring systems, the status of H1N1 flu infections was recently reclassified from regional to widespread activity.

Statewide, public health officials have seen up to threefold increases in the number of reported cases over a single week. In fact, overall flu activity is already nearing levels typically seen at the peak of flu seasons. Health officials are stressing the fact that people under the age of 25 are particularly vulnerable to this strain of illness.

"This is a young person's disease," said Nancy Jansen, director of Oakland University's Graham Health Center. "It's affecting people under the age of 25 disproportionately."

According to a recent ABC News report citing a study of H1N1 activity in 27 states, more than half of the people sick enough to be hospitalized were under the age of 25. Conversely, just 7 percent were 65 or older. The report also noted that nearly all influenza cases currently being diagnosed are the H1N1 strain rather than seasonal flu.

Given that much of the OU campus population is among the most vulnerable to H1N1, Jansen is urging students to get vaccinated.

Graham Health Center currently has the nasal H1N1 vaccine available for 18- to 24-year-olds who are not pregnant and do not have a chronic disease such as asthma or diabetes. It also is available for caregivers and household contacts of infants under 6 months of age, as well as health care workers and emergency medical services personnel. The nasal vaccine is not recommended for those 50 years of age and older.

The health center hopes to receive injectable H1N1 vaccine soon. Once received, doses will be made available to 18- to 64-year-olds with chronic disease such as asthma or diabetes. The shots also will be provided to a target group of people more than 49 years old, which includes caregivers and household contacts of infants under 6 months of age, as well as health care workers and emergency medical services personnel.

The vaccine is provided free of charge for students, while staff and faculty staff can receive a dose for \$10. Those interested in receiving the nasal vaccine can visit the health center anytime during regular business hours, which are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, except on Wednesdays, when the center is open until 6 p.m.

In conjunction with the "Make the Commuter Connection" Day & Community Business Fair," doses also will be available on the lower floor of Oakland Center from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 28.

To limit the spread of the virus as much as possible, the campus community is encouraged to practice diligent personal hygiene. This should include:

- Washing hands thoroughly and frequently
- Using hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol when soap is not available
- Not touching the eyes, nose and mouth
- Using a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing
- Avoiding direct contact with fixtures in public restrooms
- Avoiding shared use of cell phones and keeping them clean
- Cleaning personal and shared work spaces and equipment, including desk phones, preferably with a disinfectant that is labeled as virucidal or effective against influenza H1N1
- Avoiding crowded areas and shaking hands
- Limiting social contact with anyone exhibiting flu-like symptoms

Another way to prevent infection is to boost the immune system by eating healthy foods and getting adequate sleep.

Those wishing to learn more about the status of the pandemic are encouraged to monitor advisories issued by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)**. For more additional information on the status of the H1N1 flu pandemic and infection prevention methods, visit **OU's Infection Prevention & Control Web site**, the **Oakland County Health Division Web site** and **www.flu.gov**.

SUMMARY

Graham Health Center is offering vaccines for the H1N1 flu that has been reclassified from regional to widespread activity, and largely affects people under the age of 25.

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