



Fall 2009

Dear Parent or Guardian,

There is a new virus making people ill called the 2009 H1N1 (swine) flu. Because it is new, many more children and young adults than usual are sick. It will continue to cause illness, hospital stays and some deaths throughout the fall and winter. Vaccination is the best way to protect your family.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that certain groups receive the 2009 H1N1 vaccine when it first becomes available. These target groups include:

- Pregnant women;
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age;
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel;
- **Persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old;** and
- People ages of 25 through 64 years of age who have certain health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

Vaccination efforts are designed to reduce the spread of the flu. The priority groups above are the people who are at the highest risk of complications (hospitalization and death), those who are likely to come in contact with the flu, and those who could infect infants who are too young to be vaccinated.

We are working with doctors' offices, health centers, pharmacies, and others, to make this vaccine widely available. To protect as many children as possible, reduce the demand on doctors' offices, and make it more convenient for you, we will be offering the 2009 H1N1 flu shot at no charge in the schools/districts for students and staff.

It's important that you read all of the attached information. It's meant to help you make an informed choice. This packet includes a "what you need to know" fact sheet about the disease and the vaccine. It also includes a consent form. All students must return a consent form within 3 school days telling us whether you would like your child vaccinated or not. Only students with a signed consent form will be vaccinated. **There will not be a make-up day for this opportunity.**

Please Note: Children who are not yet 10 years of age will need two doses of vaccine, at least 4 weeks apart for protection against H1N1 flu. We will return to the school/district for the second dose. If this applies to your child, you will be sent a reminder and a second consent form to fill out and return.

For more information about the 2009 H1N1 flu, please either call 2-1-1 (231-733-1155 or 877-211-5253) or visit our website at www.muskegonhealth.net. If you have questions about whether your child should receive this vaccine, please call your child's doctor.

Sincerely,

Kenneth A. Kraus, MPA
Health Officer & Director of Public Health

Douglas E. Hoch, MD, MPH
Medical Director