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Technical questions:

H1N1 vaccine is the gift that keeps giving - Weekly H1N1 update

People across Oregon continue to get vaccinated against H1N1, and projections show that there is enough vaccine for everyone who wants one. The vaccine is steadily streaming into the state with another 162,566 doses expected this week for a cumulative total of 1,229,016.

"There are many good reasons to get an H1N1 vaccine, most significantly to protect yourself and others from getting the flu," says Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, Oregon Public Health director. "Many Oregonians at high-risk for complications from the flu have been vaccinated, which will continue. Now it's time for everyone else to get vaccinated too."

The H1N1 vaccine is now available from a variety of providers, including pharmacies, doctors' offices and public health clinics. The flu vaccine locator at www.flu.oregon.gov will help people find a nearby vaccine provider.

"Vaccination is the best protection against the H1N1 virus, which is still here and could peak again at any time. Not only will the vaccine keep people from getting sick, it will help them avoid unwittingly spreading H1N1 virus to others," says Kohn.

H1N1 influenza is spread easily from person to person, mainly when droplets from a cough or sneeze make contact with the mouth or nose of people nearby. Sick people who have droplets on their hands from coughing or sneezing can also spread the virus onto surfaces like door

handles, phones, remote controls and toys. Flu virus can live for two to eight hours on hard environmental surfaces.

"This flu is easily spread. Even if people aren't worried about themselves, we hope they will get vaccinated to protect high-risk people such as pregnant women or children and others with underlying health conditions," says Kohn.

People who care for infants less than 6 months of age should also get vaccinated against both H1N1 and seasonal flu because children in that age group are at a high-risk for complications from the flu and cannot receive the vaccine themselves.

"I urge everyone in Oregon to get H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccinations so we can take care of ourselves and look out for one another," says Kohn.

Though cases of H1N1 have declined, people are still getting sick. Since Sept. 1, 1,289 people have been hospitalized with the flu and 63 people have died.

For more information, call the Oregon Public Health Flu Hotline at 1-800-978-3040 or visit www.flu.oregon.gov