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Public Information Release

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HAS H1N1 PEAKED?

November 25, 2009

Polls conducted by McClatchy/Ipsos and CNN over the past weeks have found out that roughly 50% of Americans have no intention of getting the H1N1 vaccine for themselves or their children, even if it becomes available to them. Another 25% count themselves as either likely to get it or not likely to get it. There are many reasons people give for not wanting the vaccine. Some people, despite assurance to the contrary, have doubts about the vaccine's safety. Others just don't do shots or are just disinclined to take care of themselves. Other folks believe that they already contracted the H1N1 illness, have a natural immunity, and therefore don't need it. The news last weekend from the CDC stated that they believe that the number of new cases of H1N1 have peaked and are in decline, leading many people to believe that the storm has passed and they are safe now.

These are all beliefs that deserve some clarification. Vaccine safety has been discussed numerous times in the media, with it being deemed both safe and effective.

The most valid reason for someone not getting the H1N1 shot is because they already had the flu. They definitely know it was the flu and they may even have had a rapid flu test from their doctor that they had "Type A" flu. Type A could be the seasonal flu or the H1N1 flu. Only people who are admitted to hospitals (a very small fraction of those who get the flu) are typed out to see if the strain actually was H1N1. For everybody else, it is assumed that they had it, but they don't now with absolute certainty that it was. In reality, chances are very high that it was H1N1, since it is the dominant strain going around. Indeed, they probably are adequately immunized. To be sure, however, the actual shot or mist vaccination is still the best way to become immunized.

Now that there has been a peak in H1N1 illness activity, to many people the danger appears to have past. Seasonal flu typically shows one rise, followed by a decline in cases, with a peak of illness activity coming anywhere from mid-December to mid-February. However, H1N1 is not seasonal flu. It has so far behaved in some non-typical ways. First, it had a brief appearance in April, with the typical rise and fall pattern. There was a resurgence in September and October, for a second rise and fall. Will there be a third? Or a fourth? No one knows with any degree of certainty. H1N1 has proven to be unpredictable so far. If this were a football game, we would be in midway through the second quarter. We won't know the outcome of the game until it is over, which won't be until late April.

To date, approximately 7550 persons have been vaccinated in Miami County. This represents roughly 20% of the people in the priority groups.



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Since November 2nd, the Miami County Health District has been holding clinics two to three days per week, with evening and weekend hours. In the week of November 23, the attendance at clinics have fallen off dramatically, with only 119 people getting vaccinated on Monday, November 23rd, and 207 people getting vaccinated on Tuesday, November 24th. In an effort to reach more working families, The Health District will be changing the hours slightly next week. The clinic hours will be from 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. next Monday, November 30th and Tuesday, December 1st. As always, the clinics are still being held at the old Steve and Barry's store in the Piqua Mall. Also, nearly all OB/GYNs and pediatricians in Miami County have an adequate supply of vaccine on hand.

So far, the H1N1 flu has turned out to be a disease that is very contagious, but of relatively low virulence. This means that a lot of people get sick, but relatively few die of the disease. The middle story of this is that those who get sick get very sick. If you come down with H1N1, you will run a fever and feel very weak for several days. If you are of school age, you will likely miss an entire week of school. The H1N1 vaccine can prevent that from happening. It is, in essence, a free insurance policy against suffering and death.

There is no residency requirement to get vaccinated. People in the priority groups can go to any public health clinic in the U.S., whether it is in Miami County or anywhere else.

People are free to make their own choices about getting vaccinated or not. Making an informed choice is the best way to make one.

At this point in time, it is still unknown when the clinics will be open to people outside the priority groups. That decision is up to the Ohio Department of Health. At of this time they have no known plan.

Always check the website for the latest updates. www.miamcountyhealth.net