

MEMO: Message for child care settings
FROM: Snohomish Health District
DATE: September 11, 2009

Snohomish Health District (SHD) is providing the following updated guidance for reducing the spread of influenza in childcare settings. These recommendations are for the 2009/10 flu season assuming that the severity of influenza in fall and winter will be similar to that seen during spring and summer of 2009. If there are indications that influenza is causing more severe disease, these strategies may be revised. SHD will provide you with updated information as needed. For further guidance for responding to influenza in day cares, child care centers and early childhood programs, go to <http://www.flu.gov/professional/school/childguidance.html>

Snohomish Health District currently recommends the following strategies:

Encourage all staff to get vaccinated against the flu:

Seasonal and H1N1 influenza are caused by different viruses. This year there will be separate vaccines for seasonal and H1N1 influenza. The best way to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated. Help your staff stay well and not contribute to the spread. For more flu vaccine information go to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/>

Children less than 5 years of age and particularly those less than 2 years are at increased risk of complications from influenza. Infants less than 6 months of age are especially at risk as they are too young to be vaccinated for both seasonal or H1N1 influenza. Therefore, children in these groups and people caring for these children are a high priority for early vaccination.

Seasonal vaccine is recommended for

- all persons 6 months of age and older, including pregnant women.

Adult seasonal influenza vaccine is available at some locations in the community. Pediatric vaccine for ages 6 months through 18 years may be available by the end of September.

Contact your health care provider or Snohomish Health District at 425.339.5220 for scheduling vaccinations.

H1N1 vaccine is not yet available. Snohomish Health District will provide updates when vaccine becomes available locally. Currently, H1N1 vaccinations are recommended for the following groups which include all children and many staff in your setting:

- persons aged 6 months--24 years
- persons who live with or provide care for infants aged <6 months (e.g., parents siblings, and daycare providers)
- health-care and emergency medical services personnel
- persons aged 25--64 years who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza-related complications
- pregnant women

7 Steps For Childcare Centers for H1N1 Influenza

Snohomish County Health District is providing the following suggestions to help slow the spread of influenza during the 2009/2010 Flu Season

Stay home when ill—Children or child care staff with flu-like illness should remain at home and away from others until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever, ($\geq 100^{\circ}$ F or 37.8° C orally) without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Conduct daily health checks to observe for signs or symptoms of flu-like illness. Check children and child care staff as they arrive for the day and periodically throughout the day. Symptoms may include stomach distress, cold like symptoms and/or fever.

Separate ill children and staff until they can be sent home.

Encourage good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Assist children with hand washing especially after using the bathroom, and before eating. Teach coughing into tissue or elbow, and remind children not to share cups or eating utensils.

Perform regular environmental cleaning. Emphasize special cleaning focus on items or areas that have more frequent contact with hands and mouths or respiratory secretions (toys, play areas, tables).

Encourage early treatment for children and staff at high risk for flu complications. Parents and staff should talk with their health care provider to determine if they or a family member are at high risk for flu complications.

Consider selective early childhood program closures carefully. Snohomish Health District asks that you contact us at 425-339-5278 for assistance in making any closure decisions. Decisions need to balance disease risks with social and economic disruption caused by closures. ***We do not recommend any routine closures at this time.*** Recommendations will be based on an assessment of the current flu situation.

For further information on influenza, go to www.flu.gov or www.snohd.org

Additional recommendations for Child Care programs for the 2009-2010 flu season:

- Have updated plans and procedures in place. Make sure that all staff know where these procedures are kept at your facility.
- Encourage your staff to get their own family prepared. Develop a plan for care if their own child/children are ill. Stock up on pain reliever, fluids, tissue and other supplies now.
- Develop contingency plans to cover key positions when staff are absent from work. Share key contact phone numbers with primary staff.
- Develop a back up plan for opening and closing shifts
- Review your sick leave policies so as to prevent barriers to staff staying home while ill or to care for ill family members. A doctor's note should not be required to return to the early childhood setting. Consider flexible scheduling for those without sick leave or personal health insurance. (i.e., work an extra shift after illness has passed to make up for lost work time rather than lose wages)
- Make sure that you have updated contact information for families and staff.
- Share your plans with families and staff. Designate a point person to give information to families and to staff.

For more specific information for Child Care Centers, visit

<http://www.flu.gov/professional/school/childguidance.html>

Thank you for your efforts to reduce the spread of influenza. Snohomish Health District looks forward to continued work with you to keep our community safe.

For further information on influenza, go to www.snocoflu.com

Free H1N1 health brochures and posters are available at

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/flyers.htm>

Snohomish Health District, 425-339-5278 www.snohd.org .
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