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December 21, 2009

State health officer sends H1N1 update to WVFLU.org subscribers

Health officials today announced that a H1N1 update from State Health Officer Dr. Cathy Slemp, who is leading the fight against H1N1 in West Virginia, is being sent electronically by e-mail to individuals that signed up for the free update online at www.wvflu.org. The letter from Dr. Slemp says, "H1N1 flu cases continue to decline in West Virginia. This is great news." She adds, "Only time will tell what role H1N1 will play in this year's traditional flu season or if there will be another wave of H1N1. So taking precautions to prevent disease certainly remains wise."

Dr. Cathy Slemp reminds West Virginians that vaccination along with good personal hygiene measures such as washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes and discarding used tissues are helpful in preventing flu. "While you're out holiday shopping, give yourself and your family the gift of a healthy start to the new year by getting yourself and those you care for vaccinated." said Dr. Slemp.

Persons interested in receiving free updates on the status of H1N1 in West Virginia from Dr. Slemp may go online to www.wvflu.org and click on the "sign up for updates" section located at the bottom of the homepage. The updates are provided free. More information about H1N1 vaccine is available at www.wvflu.org.

The update is as follows:

As West Virginia's State Health Officer, I am providing you with an update on the H1N1 outbreak in West Virginia and on our state's vaccination efforts.

H1N1 flu cases continue to decline in West Virginia. This is great news. We do still see the virus circulating in our communities, however, and flu is unpredictable. Only time will tell what role H1N1 will play in this year's traditional flu season or if there will be another wave of H1N1. So, taking precautions to prevent disease certainly remains wise.

Vaccination efforts are going well. Thousands of West Virginians have protected themselves and their children against H1N1 by getting vaccinated. To date, 512,000 doses of H1N1 vaccine have been distributed statewide. National safety monitoring shows the vaccine to have a good safety profile – very similar to seasonal flu vaccine, as expected.

Besides vaccinating those at highest risk of disease and its complications (people age 6 months – 24 years, pregnant women, adults with underlying diseases, caregivers of infants, and healthcare workers), increased vaccine supply now allows us to offer vaccine to anyone who would like to reduce their risk of H1N1 disease. This includes healthy

persons age 25-64 and all persons over 65 years of age. Anyone who would like to protect themselves against H1N1 can do so in most West Virginia communities. Besides local health departments, vaccine is now in many private provider offices and pharmacies across the state. **So, while you're out holiday shopping, give yourself and your family the gift of a healthy start to the new year by getting yourself and those you care for vaccinated.**

Traditional flu season will soon begin. H1N1 has raised awareness of how serious all flu can be and more West Virginians than ever have gotten their seasonal flu vaccine. While more flu vaccine than ever was distributed, the demand outstretched supply. If you did not yet get a seasonal flu vaccine, a few doses remain in many communities.

You can find information on where both vaccines are available through two sites. Go to www.flu.gov and put in your zip code to pull down information on clinics through a variety of settings or go to www.wvflu.org and pull down the interactive West Virginia map to learn how each local health department is disseminating information on flu vaccines, primarily H1N1. You can also call your local health department or provider.

If you need additional information on want to review the latest updates on our website, please go to www.wvflu.org. Wishing each of you a happy and healthy holiday season!

Sincerely,

Cathy Slemp
Catherine C. Slemp, M.D., MPH
West Virginia State Health Officer

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