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## H1N1 Clinics Kick Off in Interior Health: Seasonal Flu Clinics Expand Eligibility Criteria

With the announcement of the approval of the H1N1 vaccine, plans for adding H1N1 clinics throughout Interior Health kicked into high gear today.

The first clinics get underway next week in three locations with the rest starting the week of November 2 as local facilities are booked and staff and volunteers are organized to help run the clinics.

“We will be receiving our H1N1 vaccine in smaller batches, more frequently,” reports Dr. Andrew Larder, Senior Medical Health Officer for Interior Health. “That’s why we are offering the vaccine to those that will benefit the most from its use first – those people at greater risk of serious health complications from H1N1.”

The following is a list of the highest risk groups and we recommend that they receive their vaccinations first:

- Pregnant women in the second half of pregnancy in communities where H1N1 influenza is actively circulating. NOTE: once nonadjuvanted vaccine is available, it should be used preferentially in this group, and offered regardless of local circulation of H1N1 influenza
- Persons under age 65 with chronic conditions
- Persons residing in rural and remote communities, including First Nations

Starting the week of Nov. 2, the following groups will then be eligible to also get their shot:

- Children 6 months to less than 5 years (59 months)
- Healthcare workers, who are involved with the pandemic response of delivery of essential health services.
- Household contacts and care providers of infants < 6 months of age and of persons who are immunocompromised.

In mid-November, after the priority groups have had the opportunity to get immunized, the clinics will be open to anyone who needs or wants an H1N1 vaccine, free of charge.

The H1N1 clinics will be held jointly with the seasonal flu clinics currently underway. When it's recommended for people to get their H1N1 shot, they will now be able to get a seasonal flu shot at the same time, if they are eligible.

“We are also recommending that those eligible to receive both their H1N1 vaccine and their seasonal flu shot get them at the same time,” adds Dr. Larder.

### Seasonal Flu Clinics Expand to Include Those at Risk

In addition, to the new H1N1 clinics, the seasonal flu clinics are also expanding to offer the free vaccine to anyone who has been eligible in past years, not just those over 65 years. This list includes:

- People 65 years and older and their caregivers/household contacts
- Children and adults with chronic health conditions and their household contacts
- Children and adolescents (6 months to 18 years) with conditions treated for long periods of time with Acetylsalicylic acid and their household contacts
- Healthy children age 6-23 months
- Household contacts and caregivers of infants age 0-23 months
- Pregnant women who will be in their third trimester during influenza season and their household contacts
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic care facilities

- Health care and other care providers in facilities and community settings who are capable of transmitting influenza to those at high risk of influenza complications
- People who work with live poultry and/or swine.

“H1N1 is by far the most predominant flu circulating this fall,” says Dr. Larder. “Getting your flu shot will help protect you and those around you. In addition, we also continue to encourage everyone to practice safe hygiene: cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, wash your hands frequently and stay home if you are sick.”

The first clinics start in three communities that have the supplies and the staff ready to go. These start October 29<sup>th</sup> in Vernon, Creston and 100 Mile House on October 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. The majority of clinics in the rest of IH will get underway the week of November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Details about times, dates and locations of the clinic nearest you, when available, will be posted on the website and at:

- [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)
- [www.immunizebc.ca](http://www.immunizebc.ca)
- HealthLink BC, dial 8-1-1, open 24/7
- Your local Public Health Centre

#### **For more information on H1N1 and seasonal flu:**

- Log on to the Interior Health website for updates and information [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca)
- Call HealthLink BC by dialing 8-1-1 or visiting [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca).
- View British Columbia updates on the H1N1 Flu Virus (human swine flu) are available at [www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu](http://www.gov.bc.ca/swineflu).
- Read HealthLink BC Files:
  - #12b Facts About the Flu <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile12b.stm>
  - #12a Why Seniors Should Get Flu Vaccinations <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile12a.stm>
  - #12c Flu Immunization: Myths and Facts <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile12c.stm>
  - #12d Influenza (Flu) Vaccine <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile12d.stm>
- Learn how to protect yourself against flu at <http://fightflu.ca/index-eng.html>.
- Additional information can be found at:
  - BC Centre for Disease Control at [www.bccdc.org](http://www.bccdc.org);
  - Public Health Agency of Canada at [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine\\_200904-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/alert-alerte/swine_200904-eng.php); and
  - World Health Organization at [www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html).