



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Pinellas County Health Department Partners With
Pinellas County Schools to Immunize Students Against H1N1 (Swine) Flu**

ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA – The Pinellas County Health Department has partnered with Pinellas County Schools to provide H1N1 (swine) flu immunizations to students in elementary, middle and high schools as part of an agreement finalized on Oct. 6.

Health department staff will provide the vaccines in schools to students whose parents or guardians provide their consent via forms that will go out in information packets this month. The packets contain the consent form, an assessment that parents will fill out to determine if their child can receive the H1N1 (swine) flu vaccine and vaccine information sheets that explain the risks and contraindications associated with any immunization.

“Our partners at Pinellas County Schools are as concerned as we are about the health of the county’s children and they have been working diligently with us to make this happen,” said Claude Dharamraj, MD, MPH, director of the Pinellas County Health Department. “Protecting our children against this virus is a major undertaking that we couldn’t have planned without the cooperation of Superintendent Julie Janssen.”

While H1N1 (swine) flu is a pandemic as well as a potentially serious illness, vaccinations are voluntary. Parents who do not wish to have their children vaccinated can simply not return the consent forms to their child’s school. Many parents may also opt to have their child vaccinated at their pediatrician’s office or at other sites around their county instead of in school during instruction hours.

The consent form spells out that the vaccination options are the flu shot or the intranasal flu spray; neither contains the preservative thimerosal. The flu shot contains a “killed” virus, but the intranasal spray is made with a weakened live, attenuated virus. As such, it’s not suitable for children with compromised immune systems or those with a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome.

(MORE)



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As of Oct. 7, there have been 109 laboratory-confirmed H1N1 (swine) flu fatalities reported in Florida. H1N1 (swine) flu was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. In June 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of H1N1 (swine) flu was underway.

The symptoms of H1N1 (swine) flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with this virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

Take these everyday steps to protect yourself and others against the flu:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it to avoid spreading viruses.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to lessen the spread of germs.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

If you are sick with a flu-like illness, the Centers for Disease Control recommend that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to avoid making others sick.

For more information about the H1N1 (Swine) flu virus, go to:

- ***The Pinellas County Health Department, www.pinellashealth.com or call the H1N1 (Swine) flu information line at (727) 824-6964.***
- ***The Florida Department of Health's information line, (877) 352-3581, is staffed from 8 AM to 8 PM daily and has messages in English, Spanish and Creole. There are recorded messages around the clock.***
- ***The Florida Department of Health, <http://www.MyFluSafety.com>***
- ***The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/>***



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- *The World Health Organization, (WHO), <http://www.who.int/en/>*
- *Flu.gov, <http://www.flu.gov/>*

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www.PinellasHealth.com