

## **For Immediate Release**

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# **Health Department, Private Providers Give Over 500,000 Doses of H1N1 Vaccine It's Not Too Late to Vaccinate**

**(Little Rock)** — Since the vaccine became available just over three months ago, the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and private providers have given over 500,000 doses of the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine. Exact numbers are not known, according to the ADH, because reporting and data input from private providers (hospitals, physicians, clinics and pharmacies) won't be complete until later in the season.

According to Dr. Nate Smith, State Epidemiologist, the effort is not over yet—it's not too late to get flu shots this year. By now, vaccine is widely available for anyone who wants to be protected against both the seasonal flu and the 2009 H1N1 flu. Both kinds of vaccine are available in local health units across the state, and through many private providers and pharmacies. There will be no charge for the H1N1 flu vaccine at the local health units but please bring your insurance, Medicare, Medicaid and/or ARKids First cards with you if you have one. The cost for a seasonal flu shot at the local health units is \$20. At pharmacies and doctors' offices, there is a minimal charge for H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccine.

"We are very concerned that people think the pandemic may be over and are complacent about getting vaccinated," Dr. Smith commented. "We don't have any way to know what the flu virus might do, and we want to make sure that everyone who wants to get protected has that chance."

According to Smith, "The virus could mutate into a more dangerous form, and we could still see some cases of the seasonal flu. Full protection from both will require two different vaccines this year."

The vaccine has proven to be as safe and effective as seasonal flu vaccine. "In Arkansas, the Arkansas Department of Health administered 626,578 doses of seasonal and H1N1 vaccine at an estimated 1,064 school/daycare clinics statewide and at 177 mass flu clinics in every county, and there were no known reports to CDC of any undesirable reactions to any flu vaccine," Smith said.

"We want to remind parents that children less than 10 years of age need a second dose of H1N1 vaccine 30 days or more after the receiving the first vaccine," Smith said. "Children less than

nine years of age need a second dose of seasonal flu vaccine if they have never had a shot. All children and adults need the vaccine because H1N1 flu is still making people sick.”

The seasonal flu season in Arkansas typically peaks in January and February, but so far, there have been no reported cases of seasonal flu. The 2009 H1N1 flu has dominated the season and has produced more illnesses and an earlier season than what is typical for the state.

It is especially important for healthcare workers, children, pregnant women, young adults ages 19-24, and anyone with underlying health conditions to get flu shots for both the H1N1 and the seasonal flu. The largest numbers of cases have been seen in people younger than 24, but pregnant women and those with underlying health conditions have seen a larger share of serious illness and death. Senior citizens are encouraged to get the vaccine, as well.

For more information, call your local county health unit, the ADH hotline at 1-800-651-3493, or visit [www.healthyarkansas.gov](http://www.healthyarkansas.gov)

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