

Health Officials: Still Time to Get Vaccinated for H1N1 Flu

By Emily B. Moses, Focus Editor

While the number of H1N1 flu cases has decreased in recent weeks, Department for Public Health (DPH) officials want Kentuckians to know the flu continues to circulate and is more prevalent than normal for this time of year.

“It is important to recognize that while we are seeing fewer flu cases, we are still seeing an awful lot of flu across Kentucky,” said DPH Commissioner Dr. William Hacker. “We are not through with this flu season.”

Typically, health officials do not begin to see an increase in seasonal flu activity until January. Hacker said health officials have not ruled out the possibility that there will be a “second wave” of flu in the new year.

For that reason, he said, getting an H1N1 flu vaccine should remain a priority for people who have not yet received it, especially those who fall into a target group. People in target groups are:

- Pregnant women.
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months old.
- Health care and emergency medical services workers.
- Children and young adults 6 months through 24 years old, especially those with chronic health problems.
- People 25-64 years old with chronic health conditions.

Because the H1N1 flu vaccine is now more readily available in the state, some health department districts are expanding their vaccine distribution to include the general public, said State Epidemiologist Dr. Kraig Humbaugh.

About 1.13 million doses have been allocated to Kentucky as its share of the federal supply. The amount covers roughly 26 percent of the state. Of the 1.13 million, 946,000 doses of vaccine have been delivered to the state.

Humbaugh reiterated Hacker’s call for people in target groups to actively seek the vaccine. In addition, he said many people should also take the pneumococcal vaccine, which helps prevent pneumonia, an often deadly illness associated with the flu.

“There is not a shortage of the pneumococcal vaccine,” he said. “It is recommended for people 65 and older, those with chronic illness and smokers.”

In addition to the slight decrease in flu cases, H1N1-associated deaths have also decreased. In all, Kentucky has had 36 deaths associated with H1N1 flu. Thirty of the 36 people had underlying medical conditions. Three of the deaths were pediatric.

The H1N1 flu vaccine is being given at local health departments and 1,300 private care providers in the state. The pneumococcal vaccine is available at local health departments or your health care provider.

Survey to Assess H1N1 Vaccine Availability to Kentuckians

The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) is asking that Kentucky residents take a new online survey about availability and related issues involving the H1N1 vaccine.

The survey is anonymous and can be accessed at <http://healthalerts.ky.gov>. It will be available through Dec. 19, 2009.

The survey will be used to help measure the extent to which target group populations in Kentucky have been able to access and obtain the H1N1 vaccine and the projected percentage of Kentuckians in the target groups who have received it or wish to receive it.

The target groups identified for the survey include: pregnant women; people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months; young adults from 18 to 24 years of age; and people with chronic health conditions that include asthma, neurological conditions, chronic lung and heart disease, and disorders of the kidney, liver, endocrine system and blood.

“We will be using this survey as a tool to measure the saturation of available H1N1 vaccine in communities across the state, specifically for the target groups identified as being at higher risk for developing complications from flu,” said DPH Commissioner William Hacker. “We especially ask that families, college students and other young adults, pregnant women and those with chronic health conditions take time to respond to this survey.”

A telephone survey will also be conducted simultaneously with the online survey. The survey is being conducted by The Matrix Group, based in Lexington. Funding for the survey was provided through a federal grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

National TV Program to Focus on Adoption

By Anya Armes Weber

Adoption will be in the national spotlight this month with a television show featuring celebrity performances and stories of “forever families.”

“A Home for the Holidays” will air at 8 p.m. EST Wednesday, Dec. 23, on CBS affiliates. The hour-long program is in its 11th year of production and is presented by the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption and the Children's Action Network.

The program will share stories of foster care adoptions across the country.

Country music singer Faith Hill headlines the event, which will also feature performances by entertainers Mary J. Blige, Michael Franti, Reba McEntire, Shakira and Carrie Underwood.

Actors Jenna Elfman, Nia Vardalos and others will present moving stories of children adopted from foster care and those who still wait.

“We have received an excellent response to this program from the citizens of Kentucky over the past several years,” said Mike Grimes, manager of the Department for Community Based Services Adoption Branch. “Many of those responding have gone on to adopt children in our Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP).”

SNAP works to recruit adoptive and foster families for Kentucky's waiting children. About 400 Kentucky children are available and waiting for adoption with no identified family.

State employees can receive financial assistance for direct costs related to the adoption of a child. Find out about the benefits from the [Personnel Cabinet](#). Learn more about adoption on the [SNAP home page](#).

CHFS Weight Wise Challenge

Congratulations to all CHFS employees who participated in the Weight Wise Challenge. The 180 Cabinet employees who participated collectively lost more than 900 pounds.

The “Slimpossibles” won the team challenge from CHFS with a 6.35 percent weight loss. An individual CHFS employee took the top individual weight loss by losing 25 pounds during the 12-week challenge. The challenge was part of the Personnel Cabinet’s Journey to Wellness.

If leading a healthier lifestyle is your New Year’s resolution, options for assistance are available to you:

Virgin Health Miles - <http://www.virginhealthmiles.com/> Increase your physical activity by wearing a pedometer and upload your individual progress on your own health page. Participants are entered into cash drawings for completing 7,000 steps a day and are eligible to win other prizes for completing each level.

Weight Watchers at Work (CHR building in Frankfort) - Tuesdays at 11:30 a.m. in the fourth floor Bluegrass Conference room. If you would like to start a meeting at your worksite, please visit <http://www.weightwatchers.com/index.aspx>.

Yoga (Frankfort area only) – Scheduled for 4:40 to 5:40 p.m. Mondays, Jan. 11, 18 and 25, in the CHR Building Cafeteria. Please bring a yoga mat, towel and water, and wear comfortable clothing.

If you have additional questions regarding continuation of the Weight Wise Challenge or the programs listed above, please contact Kris Hayslett at kris.hayslett@ky.gov.

Living Well: Winter Weight Tips

By Kris Hayslett

Do winter chill and short days leave you moving less and eating more? If you are feeling the seasonal changes, you are not alone. Studies show that most of us gain at least a pound during the winter season. People who are overweight tend to gain the most. Weight fluctuations are a part of life. But studies show pounds added during colder times of the year linger well after the winter chill has dissipated. This can lead to obesity and diseases related to being obese or overweight. Follow these simple tips to avoid the winter weight gain.

Pack it in. Keep your refrigerator and pantry stocked with a variety of healthy foods. Also, plan out several quick and easy meals to avoid eating out or hitting the drive-thru. Stock up on veggies like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and artichokes, all low in calories, high in water content and rich with antioxidants. Select lean meats like turkey or chicken breasts, along with low-fat dairy products for calcium and additional proteins. Watch out for pantry items high in sodium and stick with broth-based soups, beans, tomato sauces, canned tuna, nuts, whole grain pastas, cereals and rice.

Create your own pasta bowl. Don't avoid pasta, but be sure to eat a whole grain version. The whole grain carbohydrate-rich foods lift serotonin levels, believed to improve your mood and boost your immune system. Also, whole grains are digested slower so you fill up faster and feel full longer.

Snack smarter. Snacking in-between meals maintains your metabolism as well as provides key nutrients and antioxidants that can be helpful during the winter cold and flu season. Healthy snack examples include: a cup of unsweetened applesauce, low-fat granola bars, roasted unsalted nuts and seeds, a tablespoon of peanut butter, dried fruits made without sugar and whole-grain cereal.

When in doubt, keep track. Logging your food and beverage consumption can actually help you lose weight. Writing down everything you eat and drink as well as logging in your exercise is a quick way to keep yourself on track. Keep your log in a notebook, on your computer or, if you have an iPhone, check out the "Lose it" application.

Don't overindulge on vacation. – Just because you are off work and celebrating with family and friends does not mean you can abandon all diet restraints. Studies show maintaining a consistent dietary pattern on weekdays, weekends, holidays and vacations greatly predicts long-term weight loss maintenance.

Move it, don't lose it. Decreased physical activity during the winter season is the biggest contributor to the cold weather weight gain. Exercise burns calories, temporarily distracts us from food, boosts your mood, increases your immune system, fights depression and strengthens our willpower to make smarter food choices.

Step on it. Stepping on the scale regularly means you will notice a shift in weight, allowing you to take the necessary steps to fight off extra pounds. People who step on the scale regularly are less likely to regain weight after they lose it. If you don't have a scale, take note of how your clothes are fitting.

Remember to choose wisely and not waste calories on foods and drinks just because they are readily available. Try some of the tips above to stop the pattern of weight gain and ward off winter pounds.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Added to work responsibilities, the holidays can cause definite stress for many of us. Here are some tips for easing the anxieties of the season from America on the Move.

Take time to eat properly. At holiday work parties, try not to overindulge. Plan ahead, and don't binge on the first delicious snack you see. Take time to mingle and get a glass of water. Then if you're hungry, get more of the healthier options like fruit and veggies and just a taste of what's really tempting. At restaurants, ask for a dish from the "lighter side" menu.

Maintain your weight. Studies show that if we gain weight during the holidays, many of us are unlikely to take it off later. Fit exercise into your day by picking a far-away parking spot at work or the mall. Take a quick walk before a party to avoid the munchies.

Relax. It's the end of another year, and you deserve a break. Take a few moments to reflect on your year and your accomplishments. A brief rest can recharge you for the rest of the busy season and the possibilities of the new year.