

More Flu Vaccine Available in Ky.

Public health officials on Friday reiterated the importance of practicing good hygiene as well as getting an H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine to protect against flu.

Officials encouraged Kentuckians to practice patience when trying to find the swine flu vaccine as more of it is coming into the state each week.

State Epidemiologist Kraig Humbaugh said Kentucky has been allocated more than 342,000 doses of swine flu vaccine, more than half of which is the swine flu shot. Of the allocated vaccine, about 215,000 doses are in the state, with more coming in on a regular basis.

People who want to get the swine flu vaccine should check with their local health department or personal health care provider about availability.

Health officials are trying to make sure certain groups of people are vaccinated against swine flu before others. These groups include:

- 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 to 24 years old, especially those with chronic health problems.
- People 25 to 64 years old with chronic health problems.

People in target groups need the vaccine first because they are most at risk for developing complicated health problems from it if they become infected. All other people should receive the vaccine when there is enough available.

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect yourself and your family against flu, said Humbaugh.

“Most of the people who are infected (with flu) are recovering without treatment,” said Humbaugh. “We’re seeing a very similar pattern in terms of severity as we see with seasonal flu infection.”

Public Health Commissioner Dr. William Hacker said it is important to stay up-to-date on swine flu news to stay as healthy as possible.

“The flu is an unpredictable virus,” he said. “It is a challenge for health professionals; it is a challenge for citizens.”

Other steps you can take to keep you and your family safe from flu include:

- Wash your hands in warm, soapy water for 15 to 20 seconds — about the time it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice.
- If you cannot wash your hands, use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Teach children good health habits.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. If you do not have a tissue, cough into the crook of your elbow, not your hand.
- Stay at home if you are sick and contact your health care provider.

Resources are available to help you get your questions about swine flu answered. You can call the Kentucky Flu Hotline at (877) 843-7727 daily from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. EST. You also can get information online at healthalerts.ky.gov.

State Employees Can Get Adoption Assistance

By Anya Armes Weber

November is Adoption Awareness Month in Kentucky, and CHFS employees are reminded that they may qualify for financial assistance when they adopt.

Through the Adoption Benefit Program, Kentucky’s Personnel Cabinet provides up to \$5,000 for each qualifying family for unreimbursed costs related to a special needs child and up to \$3,000 for any other child adoption.

Mike Grimes, manager of the Department for Community Based Services’ (DCBS) Adoption Services Branch, said adoptive families get support through benefits, training and mentoring services. Families also can specify to caseworkers their preferences regarding the age, gender and specific needs of children they are looking to adopt.

“We know that for some families who are interested in adopting, there is concern about costs for medical needs, school supplies, child care – even college tuition,” he said. “When our staff is able to talk to families, they explain that help is available for these situations. We work closely with families to make sure the training and placement process goes as smoothly as possible,” he said.

Grimes said of the almost 7,000 children in state out-of-home care, more than 1,800 children have the goal of adoption. Almost 400 children are legally free for adoption and do not have identified adoptive families.

“These are the children in our Special Needs Adoption Program (SNAP) for whom we are actively recruiting families,” Grimes said.

A child having “special needs” may not necessarily mean that a child needs unique medical attention, Grimes said.

“Many of the children waiting to be adopted may be considered harder to place because they are part of sibling groups, teenagers or members of an ethnic or minority group,” he said. “Their greatest need is a place to call home.”

Last May, the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption (DTFA) named the Commonwealth of Kentucky and its state government offices as one of the top five “Best Adoption-Friendly Workplaces.” DTFA grants fund several of DCBS’ adoption awareness efforts and the salaries of two recruitment specialists who work out of Lexington and Louisville.

Learn more online at the state [adoption program’s home page](#). Learn more about the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption at <http://www.davethomasfoundation.org/>. And become a fan of the “Kentucky Foster Care & Adoption” page on Facebook.

Effort to Enroll Kentucky Children in KCHIP and Medicaid Marks One-Year Anniversary

Initiative on Track to Reach Goal Six Months Early

Governor Steve Beshear today marked the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Beshear Plan by announcing that the state is projected to enroll an additional 35,000 children in the Kentucky Children’s Health Insurance Program (KCHIP) or Medicaid programs by the end of 2009, six months ahead of schedule.

“Our original target date for enrolling 35,000 additional children in KCHIP or Medicaid was June 30, 2010. Today, just one year since the launch of this extensive effort, we are significantly ahead of schedule, due to our increased outreach efforts and simplification of the enrollment process,” Gov. Beshear announced at an event at Second Street School in Frankfort. “Meeting our goal earlier than anticipated also serves as an indicator of the state of our economy and demonstrates the effect it has on families’ everyday lives. We are clearly making a difference in easing the burden these difficult economic conditions have put on families.”

The goal of the Beshear Plan is to dramatically cut the number of children without health coverage by removing barriers to KCHIP and Medicaid enrollment. Current estimates are that approximately 32,000 additional children have been enrolled in the programs since the launch of the initiative, an average of more than 2,600 children per month. (Official numbers for October will be available in mid-November.)

Gov. Beshear’s statewide initiative began in November 2008 with a simplified mail-in application, available online and targeted outreach efforts. Efforts have included a focus on training community partners to assist with completion of applications; availability of enrollment materials at local health departments, Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) offices and Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSC); and outreach through health care providers, community action agencies, day care centers, faith-based organizations and many others.

Over the past year, KCHIP and Medicaid staff and community partners such as United Way have distributed thousands of mail-in applications and brochures, in both English and Spanish; attended dozens of school events, including open houses and back-to-school celebrations around the state; and trained around 2,600 people, including representatives of local health departments, schools, community organizations and medical providers, on the application process. A back-to-school campaign in August featured radio ads, bookmarks distributed to school children, and ads on city buses.

In addition, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services has intensified efforts to re-enroll children who had previously been covered through the programs, including making policy changes to allow families an additional 30 days to return renewal information.

“I appreciate the work of the many partners who have helped reach out to Kentucky families whose lives could be made a bit easier in these difficult times, through assistance with health insurance for children,” said Gov. Beshear. “We will keep working to get every eligible child the health insurance they need.”

“Identifying and enrolling these children in KCHIP and Medicaid is not an easy process, and I’m proud of the collaboration and hard work by our staff and community partners who have helped us in our outreach efforts. As a result, we are well on our way to our goal, but more importantly, Kentucky families are getting much-needed relief,” said CHFS Secretary Janie Miller.

The KCHIP program provides health insurance to children whose family income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, about \$44,100 a year for a family of four. More details of the Beshear Plan and enrollment information are available at <http://kidshealth.ky.gov>

Living Well: Interesting Daytime TV

If you have previously ignored daytime television, you might want to take a second look and catch The Dr. Oz Show. Dr. Mehmet Oz, formerly an Oprah Winfrey Show favorite, has stepped away from his guest role and moved on to captivating an audience of his own. He has shared a few health tips with Men’s Health magazine that apply to anyone:

ROTF (Rolling on the floor laughing) - Laugh more to ease stress, promote social bonding, decrease blood pressure and possibly increase your immune system.

Don’t skip breakfast – Eating fiber in the morning means less hunger in the late afternoon, which is also when you’re most likely to feel tired and reach for a sugar fix. Also, an early start on eating keeps your metabolism more active throughout the day, resulting in breakfast eaters being thinner people than those who rush out the door and skip it.

Hit the sack - The recommended seven hours of sleep help you live longer, but getting adequate sleep also lowers stress, sharpens your memory and reduces cravings for calorie-rich foods. Set a regular bedtime, and stick to it. If you are a late night TV fan, record it and watch it the next day.

Taste the colors – Foods with bright rich colors are not only pretty to look at, but also are packed with flavonoids, carotenoids and other powerful compounds that bind to damaging free radicals in your body, lowering inflammation. Dr. Oz does point out that Skittles do not count! Eating nine fistfuls of colorful fruits and vegetables each day will allow you to reap the benefits and not give up other foods. His favorites are arugula and blueberries.

Brushing is not enough - Dr. Oz equates brushing only without flossing to washing only one armpit after working out. Brushing alone causes us to miss a good portion of the total surface. The real dangers of not flossing go beyond good hygiene. The bacteria that linger can increase the risk of heart disease.

Take a deep belly breath – This can be done at any time or anywhere. He tells us to push out our bellows and suck air through the nose until the lungs are full. This deep breath will cause nitric oxide which is found in the back of your nose to open up blood vessels. The result of this dose of oxygen will make you feel happier, more alert and is a secret technique for calming down.

These are just a few of Dr. Oz's recommendations on living a healthier lifestyle. He also suggests other tips like drinking green tea (has heart-boosting and cancer-stopping polyphenols); sweating for just one hour a week (reduced risk of heart attack, better mood and lower blood pressure); knowing your health numbers (blood pressure, LDL cholesterol, resting heart rate and fasting blood sugar); lifting weights (increasing muscle mass also increases the number of calories burned); eating nuts (great source of healthy fats and protein that is filling enough to keep you out of the drive-thru); hitting the dance floor (even the simplest moves stimulate the neurons for brain health); and learning to cook (you will save money and gain control over meal preparation). These recommendations may play an important role in improving or maintaining your physical health along with your mental health. Check your local listings for more tips from Dr. Oz.

CHFS Health Tip of the Week: Find the Swine Flu Vaccine

Do you want to know when the swine flu vaccine will be given at a clinic in your community? Find out if your local health department will offer mass vaccination clinics at the Health Alerts Web site: <http://healthalerts.ky.gov/Pages/VaccineClinics.aspx>. The site lists clinics that are already scheduled. Check back often to find clinics in your area.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Dealing with personal grief is always hard. Returning to work while grieving can be extremely difficult for some staff. You can provide some comfort to a coworker who has experienced a personal loss.

Dr. Kirsti Dyer is a wellness specialist and authors a Web page, journeyofhearts.org, which offers help to anyone who has experienced loss. She suggests that when someone is grieving, listening is the most important thing we can do to comfort them. Here are some other ways to help:

- Express sincere sympathy either in person or in writing. Let your coworker know you empathize with his or her loss.
- Offer specific assistance such as providing meals, caring for pets or children and helping with errands.
- Expect tears and sadness, and expect to listen to a grieving colleague's story more than once.
- Respect privacy. Honor closed doors and any silences in conversation.
- Include the coworker in social plans and let him or her decide whether to participate.

Staff who supports one another through difficult personal times will work together better professionally.