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N E W S

Ted Strickland, Governor
Alvin D. Jackson, M.D., Director

Office of Public Affairs
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GOVERNOR AND DIRECTOR OF HEALTH PROVIDE UPDATE ON H1N1 FLU

COLUMBUS – Ohio officials are working together to protect Ohioans from the H1N1 virus, Gov. Ted Strickland said today, as he briefed media on Ohio's efforts with Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D., and other officials.

Strickland announced he has signed an emergency proclamation allowing 17,000 Ohio EMTs to give the H1N1 vaccine to Ohioans and to allow the transfer of antiviral medications and supplies to Ohio communities.

“Because of the spread of H1N1 and the likelihood of increased sickness among Ohioans, state government has been working to develop a plan that allows us to respond quickly to H1N1 cases,” Strickland said. “Keeping ourselves, our families and our communities safer and healthier is a responsibility for all of us.”

Jackson noted that ODH is expecting 61,500 doses of H1N1 nasal spray vaccine in the coming days, which will be given to hospitals and local health departments to focus initial vaccination efforts on health care workers who provide direct patient care and EMS workers and other health professional who provide direct patient care.

More vaccine will be available in the coming weeks, Jackson said.

“While vaccination is the best way to protect oneself from flu, other prevention measures are effective,” Jackson said. “Wash your hands, cover your cough and stay home from when you are sick.”

ODH is reporting widespread flu activity to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and circulating strains include mostly H1N1 flu, but seasonal flu as well, Jackson said.

Strickland urged all Ohioans to get a seasonal flu shot and stay informed on when H1N1 vaccine will be available for them.

“Dr. Jackson has advised all of us that our seasonal flu shots are very important,” Strickland said. “With recent focus on the H1N1 virus, I remind everyone not to overlook their seasonal flu vaccinations. I encourage all Ohioans to speak with their doctor or health care provider to see if the flu shot is appropriate for them.”

Ohio Board of Regents Chancellor Eric Fingerhut urged students on Ohio's campuses to follow the governor's advice, as students are at high risk for H1N1 infection. Seasonal shots are also encouraged, he added.

“Our college and university students have been identified as one of the most at-risk populations for contracting and spreading H1N1 flu,” Fingerhut said. “Although this population is generally healthy as young adults, they often live, work and study in close proximity to each other.”

The Ohio Department of Education is also taking steps to ensure that the state's K-12 population is prepared for H1N1 and advised on prevention measures.

“We are committed to keeping our school communities safe and healthy places for students to learn and for teachers and administrators to work,” said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Deb Delisle.

For more information and updates on where vaccines will be available, check the ODH Web site at <http://www.odh.ohio.gov> or call the ODH H1N1 information line at 1-866-800-1404 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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