

OREGON COALITIONS BRING FLU VACCINE TO ALL

On Monday, January 11, 2010, Governor Ted Kulongoski proclaimed Jan. 10-16 National Influenza Vaccination Week in Oregon. He urges all Oregonians to join in this observance because vaccination can prevent the spread of influenza in our state.

As National Flu Vaccine Week continues, Oregon Public Health reminds everyone that H1N1 vaccine is widely available and recommended to prevent this potentially serious infection. Vaccination against seasonal flu is also a good idea.

“Vaccination is the best way to prevent another wave of flu in Oregon,” says Mel Kohn, MD, MPH, Oregon Public Health director. “Flu activity will continue into the winter and spring. It’s time for everyone who hasn’t been vaccinated to do so now, and we have programs in place to make sure everyone can get a flu shot.”

For many people, getting a flu shot means a quick stop at a pharmacy or visit to a clinic. But for some, vaccination is hindered by obstacles such as no health insurance, being confined at home, living on a limited budget or speaking a language other than English. Two statewide coalitions are committed to ensuring all people in Oregon get the vaccinations they need. Oregon Public Health is affiliated with both these groups: the Oregon Adult Immunization Coalition (OAIC) and the Oregon Partnership to Immunize Children (OPIC).

OAIC’s Free, Local, Underserved (FLU) project gathers donated vaccine and clinical supplies for people who otherwise would not likely get a vaccination.

“The FLU project reaches people in need through a variety of agencies such as non-profit groups, local health departments, community coalitions and schools,” says Bryan Goodin, OAIC coordinator and Oregon Public Health’s adult vaccine coordinator.

OPIC, established in 1992, is a collaboration of public and private partners to protect Oregon’s children against vaccine-preventable illnesses.

“We provide access to science-based immunization information so parents will be completely informed,” says Karen Elliot, OPIC coordinator. “We also promote the use of ALERT, Oregon’s award-winning childhood immunization registry, and the Vaccines for Children program.”

OPIC’s many public and private partners cast a wide net across the state to ensure that children are protected against diseases that once killed, sickened or disabled thousands of children and adults every year before vaccines became widely available.

People who need to be vaccinated against seasonal and H1N1 flu, but can’t afford it, can call the Oregon Public Health Flu hotline at 800-978-3040 for a location or use the flu locator at www.flu.oregon.gov.