

12-11-09 H1N1 Clinic Organizers Looking for Help

There are numerous challenges for your local board of health offering a vaccination clinic to the public. For many of us, this is the first time we have ever done anything like this, including ordering and storing the vaccine itself. Most of us don't have public health nurses in our office and even if we did, this circumstance is vastly different from any other typically experienced. The office can't handle the phone calls or the request for appointments. So, we end up offering public clinics where people might have to wait and there might even be some uncertainty as to there being the right kind of dose for you when you get there. It helps if you have read up on this before you arrive and have a pretty good idea as to what is the best fit for you.

That's correct, there's only one vaccine for the H1N1 but there is more than one kind of dose and delivery method. To help you decide what is the appropriate or necessary choice for you, or I've just made a decision flowchart and I'll post it on the town website and have it at my clinics. It will help you to know whether or not the nasal mist is OK for you or if you need the injection. So that is where we first need your help: Read about nasal mist verses injection.

Once your decision is made, there are different doses and delivery methods but the clinic organizers will handle the details of that. You see, we have to keep track of the manufacturer, the lot number and age of the person receiving it, among other things. For instance, I'll point you to one kind of consent form if your child is under four years old (if we have that type available), another if your child is four or older and, if you can believe it, there's even one for the three year olds. I'll color code those papers and the vaccine boxes and certain nursing stations, to help the nurses know what's coming and you to know which nurse to go to. Some clinics have only one type of vaccine and the lines for that clinic move more quickly.

You'd be at the door for hours if we screened every person upon arrival, as to the ages and health conditions of each person. We've got to get you in the door and get you to read some basic questions, before you can know the right paperwork to fill out. I might hand out numbers at the door, just to give us an idea of approximately where you are in the "line".

As for the "order" and "line", please keep these considerations in mind: One family has one paper to fill out. They move along quickly to the nurses. Another family might bring three children. One has asthma and needs the injection. Another is under four and the third is over four. Both are healthy and the parents decide to go for the mist, as they hate needles. The third family with similar circumstances insists on the injection and needs to fill out three types of forms for three different manufacture's vaccine. They had a lower arrival number but took longer to get to the nurse but not too long after their "line neighbors". That's the second need: Understanding and appreciation of public clinics.

We needs lots more help, though, with set-up, handing out papers, breakdown and then packing up of signs, papers and equipment after these temporary and mobile clinics are over. Thank goodness for CERT in these circumstances! They have helped, when available, with set-up, manning the tables, directing people with questions to right source. And so much more.

This weekend, December 11 to 13, 2009, CERT will assist Plympton on the 11th with their H1N1 clinic at the townhouse from 1:30 to 3:30, at Holidays in Halifax on 12-12 and at Halifax's H1N1 clinic on 12-13 from 1 to 4 at the Halifax Elementary School's gymnasium. Whew! That's a lot of helping in three days!

If you are available to help with these clinics, know this: Your assistance is needed. I could use help in the following areas on 12-13-09:

Set-up, starting at 11:30. For the first time, I am bumping some basketball games because I have no other large space available that day. Thank you to Youth & Recreation for their understanding and cooperation! The floor has just been refinished and I have been requested to unroll mats to protect the floor. I can't set up the tables and chairs until the mats are down. So there's a real time crunch this Sunday. Here's what's happening:

From 11:30 to 12:00: place floor mats.

From 12:00 to 12:30: set up tables and chairs, set up nursing stations, organize paperwork, entry numbers and get helpers in place.

1:00 to 4:00, just a couple more people needed for watching lobby areas, "do not enter" areas. Licensed nurse always needed to assist with vaccinations.

4:00 to 4:30: Break down, move chairs and tables and pack up Cathy's car with papers, signs, sign holders, etc and bring back to the Town Hall for unpacking.

Then? Basketball continues at 5:00! Let the games begin and may we all be healthy enough to continue playing!

Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for the Town of Halifax, MA. She hopes to receive some more assistance and hopes more will think about joining CERT. She can be reached at 781 293 6768 or cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us