



October 23, 2009

Dear Parents:

All schools in Stanislaus County place a high priority on the health and safety of students. Because of concerns that this may be a serious flu season, Public Health officials are continuing to work with the County Office of Education and local schools to mitigate the spread of the H1N1 flu (swine flu) virus and "seasonal" flu.

We have been tracking school attendance and are beginning to see a marked increase in absenteeism throughout the county. In most cases, the H1N1 flu is acting very much like "seasonal" flu in severity, and most people who have it recover quickly. However, it is important that we continue to be vigilant about good hand and cough/sneeze hygiene as we move through flu season.

One of the best ways to protect against the flu is to get vaccinated. "Seasonal" flu vaccinations are available from your doctor's office as well as public clinics. While the H1N1 vaccine is now available it is limited in quantity with more available in the weeks to come. Stanislaus County received an initial 4,600 doses of nasal H1N1 Flu vaccine the second week of October. This shipment from the federal government was delivered directly to medical providers in the County. The California Department of Public Health has directed that all of it be used to immunize children who are 2 years old to just under 10 years of age. Children in this age bracket can be vaccinated at their doctors' offices.

We expect the injectable H1N1 flu vaccines (flu shot) to arrive in shipments to medical providers in Stanislaus County within the next few weeks. The California Department of Public Health (following the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines on vaccination priority) is recommending the following high-risk groups be vaccinated.

- Pregnant women
- Health care workers
- People living with or caring for infants under 6 months of age
- Emergency medical personnel
- Children from 6 months to 24 years of age
- People ages 25 – 64 with chronic medical conditions

As more vaccine becomes available, healthy 25–64 year olds and adults 65 and older should also be vaccinated.

The nasal vaccine is licensed for healthy people from 2 through 49 years of age. The nasal vaccine virus is weakened so it will not cause illness. Children under 10 years of age should get two doses of vaccine (either nasal or injection), at a minimum of 21 days apart. Older children and adults need only one dose. The public should contact their health care provider for this H1N1 vaccine.

Public Health will conduct H1N1 flu clinics in mid to late November when the H1N1 vaccine will be available in larger quantities. The Public Health H1N1 clinics are designed to be a 'safety net' for the community. Some schools may also hold H1N1 flu clinics. We highly encourage parents to get their children vaccinated at their physician's office instead of waiting for the public health or school clinics.

Working together we can mitigate the impact of H1N1 flu and other communicable diseases. For more information and resources on flu season visit [www.schsa.org](http://www.schsa.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tom Changnon'.

Tom Changnon, Superintendent  
Stanislaus County Office of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John Walker'.

Dr. John Walker, Public Health Officer  
Stanislaus County Health Services Agency