

Keith Winkler, REHS
Director of Public Health Services

Michael L. Mac Lean, M.D., M.S.
Health Officer



COUNTY OF KINGS

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

330 Campus Drive - Hanford, California 93230
Telephone: (559) 584-1401 Fax: (559) 582-7618

NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Dr. Michael Mac Lean – 559-584-1401

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 19, 2009

Kings County H1N1 Influenza-Related Child Death

HANFORD - I regret that I have to announce the H1N1 influenza-related death of a Kings County child. This first grade child had many significant preexisting medical conditions that likely interfered with his ability to fight off H1N1 infection. The death of a child is always tragic. My sympathy goes out to his family.

Twenty California children have died of influenza-related causes during the period from October 9, 2008 to September 25, 2009. Thirteen of these deaths have been related to pandemic H1N1 flu, also known as swine flu. The other seven had various strains of seasonal influenza, including a Kings County child that died earlier this year. Of the children hospitalized with complicated influenza infection, only 17% were previously healthy. The other 83% of hospitalized children had serious underlying medical conditions including chronic lung disease, neuromuscular disease, prematurity, heart disease, genetic disorders, immune suppression, and other serious medical conditions.

Vaccination is the most effective means of preventing influenza. The vaccine delivery dates are uncertain. We know that initially the amount of vaccine available will not be sufficient to immunize all of the high-priority populations against H1N1. We are challenged to see that the very limited amount of vaccine initially available reaches the highest risk groups and that the vaccine is equitably available within the targeted groups. The initial target groups are: children 6 mo to 7 years; pregnant women; school-aged children with serious medical conditions, caretakers of infants under 6 months and front line health care workers. Adults will need only one dose while children aged nine and younger will require two doses.

To date, the Kings County Health Department has received 1,600 doses of the nasal formulation for H1N1 flu, which is a live, attenuated vaccine. The nasal vaccine available for seasonal flu is also a

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live attenuated vaccine but it doesn't protect against pandemic H1N1 flu. At this time, the Health Department is making this vaccine available to healthy two-year olds only. (The vaccine is approved only for healthy individuals). The vaccine is available for free, on a walk-in basis, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday at the Health Department in Hanford. The Department will be holding clinics in Avenal and in Corcoran in the near future. People can call 1-800-649 5399 to get further information.

We are anticipating that an additional 24,000 doses will arrive in Kings County in early November. Some of this vaccine will be delivered to local health care providers. It is anticipated that the bulk of the vaccine will go to the Health Department. We will be partnering with private providers, schools, preschool and daycare providers to rapidly vaccinate the initial target groups noted above.