



### Public Health Update: What's Flu With You?

January 10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> is National Immunization Week. January is also the month when seasonal influenza (flu) usually strikes large numbers of people.

We have already experienced two *waves* (periods of time) when there were large numbers of cases of the new flu strain, 2009 A H1N1 Influenza. Though many call this the *swine flu*, it actually contains parts of bird, pig and human flu viruses. The first wave occurred during late spring and summer of 2009. The second wave which began in early October seems to be coming to an end.

Seasonal flu rates are currently very low in the United States but an outbreak could occur at any time. Perhaps there will be a third wave of H1N1 flu or maybe seasonal flu and H1N1 flu will circulate together. Only time will tell.

How can we avoid getting sick or making others sick from flu? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following actions:

- Get vaccinated
  - Vaccination is the best way to prevent flu. **IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO GET VACCINATED.** Current levels of H1N1 flu are low and seasonal flu has not yet begun, so this is the perfect time to seek out both types of vaccine.
- Heed your mother's advice
  - Cover your nose and mouth when you cough and sneeze.
    - Use the inside of your elbow or arm, rather than your hand.
  - Do not share food items, utensils, cigarettes, lipstick, etc. with people who might be sick; pretty much anyone.
  - Wash your hands frequently.
    - Use 60% alcohol hand cleansers when soap and water are not available.
  - Stay at home when you are sick.
  - Keep your hands away from your mouth and nose.
- Take anti-viral medications if your doctor recommends them

Ontario County Public Health has vaccinated approximately 3,000 people for seasonal flu this season, almost twice as many as last season. Area doctors have vaccinated thousands more. Additionally, almost 6,000 people have received H1N1 vaccine through Ontario County Public Health. Though vaccine distribution to area providers seemed sluggish at first, there are now sufficient amounts of vaccine in the community. Anyone who desires these vaccinations should be able to get them.

If you have not yet been vaccinated for seasonal flu or H1N1 flu, call your physician to make an appointment. If your physician does not offer H1N1 vaccine, come to one of the public clinics listed below. Seasonal flu vaccine is also available through the Ontario County Public Health during our weekly immunization clinics. Call for an appointment (585-396-4343 or 800-299-2995).