

29 October 2009

Pandemic H1N1 flu vaccination No. 200,000 for Queensland

Queensland has reached a major milestone for vaccinations against Pandemic H1N1 (Human Swine Flu) with Queensland Health Director-General Mr Michael Reid given the honour of being the 200,000th to be immunised.

Mr Reid and Chief Health Officer Dr Jeannette Young received their shots today and urged everyone 10 years and over to see their doctor about being vaccinated.

“While initially we targeted specific groups such as those vulnerable to severe complications including Indigenous people and pregnant women, there is now capacity for everyone to join the 200,000 vaccinated to date in Queensland,” Dr Young said.

Of those vaccinated, 160,700 have been by private providers including GPs and the remainder, including 18,700 health care workers, at Queensland Health facilities, according to reports received so far from vaccination service providers.

“Although our initial focus has been on protecting those in the vulnerable groups, everyone apart from children under 10 is encouraged to talk to a GP or health care provider about vaccination,” Dr Young said.

“Children under 10 years are not being offered vaccine yet until data from the trials on younger children is finalised and evaluated, which is expected soon.

“While flu is not normally on our minds at this time of year with summer around the corner, the facts are that this virus continues to circulate in Australia, and we still have people in hospital being treated for complications.

“As the Northern Hemisphere heads into winter, a second wave is becoming apparent with the United States declaring an emergency in its response and Canada, Mexico and some European countries reporting increasing cases,” Dr Young said.

Mr Reid said Queensland Health had met the challenge presented by the pandemic over the past six months with professionalism and dedication.

“Queensland Health staff have been congratulated on their vigilance and commitment in carrying out precautions to minimise the spread of flu. Their overall rate of sick leave this winter was lower than expected,” he said.

“As well they have dealt with an unprecedented number of people presenting at emergency departments and flu clinics with cold and flu symptoms – at around 40,000, nearly double the number in 2008.

“The private sector including GPs throughout Queensland have also been kept busy meeting the challenge and are continuing to do so through the vaccination program,” Mr Reid said.

more follows...

The total number of deaths related to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 (Human Swine Influenza) notified in Queensland remains unchanged at 41 of 187 nationally. The last reported death in Queensland was on 1 October.

Cumulatively, Queensland has had 1243 hospitalisations of 4904 nationally. As of Friday, 18 people were hospitalised including two in intensive care.

Who should be vaccinated: *Everyone aged 10 and over, but those who are most strongly recommended for vaccination are people most vulnerable to severe outcomes from the virus and the people close to them, that is:*

- *Pregnant women*
- *Indigenous people*
- *Parents and guardians of infants up to six months of age*
- *Children in special schools*
- *People with underlying medical conditions which could include:*
 - heart disease,*
 - asthma and other lung diseases,*
 - cancer,*
 - obesity (BMI > 35),*
 - diabetes,*
 - kidney and liver disease,*
 - neurological disease.*
- *Healthcare workers*

Family, carers and friends of vulnerable people should also be vaccinated.

The vaccine is provided free, but a consultation fee may be charged by a healthcare provider.

Information on Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 (Human Swine Influenza) is available from 13 HEALTH (13 432 584), Queensland Health's website at www.health.qld.gov.au/swineflu or the Commonwealth Swine Influenza Hotline on 1802007.

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