

Public Health center on community's health

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(Published in the White Mountain Independent Progress 2009 – Friday, September 11, 2009)

The Apache County Public Health Services District is offering free seasonal flu shots to all school children in Southern Apache County. We are asking for parents' help in returning consent forms to either the school or the Public Health office so that your child can participate in this campaign. If your child has not brought the forms home yet, please contact the school to get a copy or visit the public health booth at the county fair. All children participating will be entered into a drawing for a free Nintendo Wii. There are other prizes as well.

Each year flu season is amplified by children returning to school. Children are generally not as conscious of good hygiene practices as adults and therefore spread the flu through person to person contact. Flu is spread by droplets expelled through coughs and sneezes. Each year 5 to 20 percent of the U.S. population suffers from the flu and 36,000 people die from seasonal flu complications and 20,000 children are hospitalized because of flu complications.

Symptoms include high fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches and stomach symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

You can protect yourself by taking time to get vaccinated and allowing your children to participate in the school-based vaccination campaign this fall.

You can also take everyday preventative actions such as:

- * Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

- * Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.

- * Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.

- * Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

- * If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible. This is to keep from making others sick.

- * While sick, limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

- * Visit the CDC Web site (www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/) to find out what to do if you get sick with the flu and how to care for someone at home who is sick with the flu.

The exact dates of the school clinics will be determined based on the availability of vaccine. It is anticipated that Public Health will visit the schools near the first part of October. The doctors in Southern Apache County have been very supportive of this effort.

Public Health representatives will be at the county fair (Sept. 9-12) to answer questions and hand out consent forms to parents who have not had an opportunity to fill them out. We will also be giving away goodies, so come check out our booth.

To watch a video about why parents recommend getting the flu vaccine for your child, visit:

www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/flu/gallery/2008-09/vaccination_video.htm.