



Apache County Public Health Services District

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Dear Parents,

School-based flu shot campaign:

Each year we offer flu shots to the citizens of Southern Apache County. In the past we have focused our efforts on adults. This year, with your help, we would like to protect the children of our community through a school-based flu shot campaign. Flu shots will be offered free to families through the Vaccinations For Children program, private insurance, or will be subsidized by the public health office.

The Centers for Disease Control lists children aged 6 months through 19 years old as the highest priority population to receive flu shots each year. Why? Because studies have shown that children are often responsible for spreading the flu to healthy adults. We love our children, but let's face it, kids can be dirty! Children have a hard time remembering to wash their hands, they are not as diligent about covering their coughs and sneezes, and they often touch their hands to their eyes, noses and mouths.

The seasonal flu vaccine is usually available to our office mid to late October, and this is when we would like to start vaccination clinics at the schools in Southern Apache County. Our goal is to create herd immunity in our children against seasonal flu. By doing so, we can rule out seasonal flu in the winter when the H1N1 virus reappears in our community.

H1N1 virus:

The World Health Organization recently announced that the H1N1 virus has spread widely enough to call it the first official pandemic of the 21st century. The symptoms of H1N1 seem to be very similar to seasonal flu, although there is still a chance that the virus will mutate as it travels the world. The virus emerged too late to combine a vaccine into the regular seasonal flu vaccine. Instead there will be a separate vaccine for H1N1 that will be available late this year. We are still waiting for details as to how much H1N1 vaccine we will get and who it will be available to.

What we do know is that by protecting our kids against regular seasonal flu, we can be reasonably sure that if they get sick this winter it will be due to the H1N1 virus, not seasonal flu. Knowing this will help officials decide whether school closures should be considered depending on the severity of illness.

Facts about flu and the vaccine:

Seasonal flu is a serious contagious disease. Each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications. 20,000 children under five years old are among those hospitalized. Approximately 36,000 people die from the flu each year. With the flu shot, when the "match" between vaccine and circulating

strains is close, the vaccine prevents influenza in about 70-90% of health persons under 65 years of age.

The flu shot cannot cause flu. The most common side effects of the vaccine are soreness, redness, or swelling where the shot was given, low-grade fever, and/or aches. Allergic reactions to the vaccine are very rare (these may include breathing problems, hoarseness, or wheezing, hives, paleness, weakness, a fast heartbeat, or dizziness). If they do occur, it is within a few minutes to a few hours after the shot. Allergic reactions are more likely to occur among people with a severe allergic reaction to eggs because the viruses used in the influenza vaccine are grown in hen's eggs. If your child has had a severe reaction to eggs or to a flu shot in the past they should not get a flu shot before seeing a physician.

What we need from parents:

Parents need to fill out the attached permission slip and health screening, complete with your insurance information. If you have any questions regarding the flu vaccine or this campaign, please call our office at 928-333-2415 and ask to speak to Devonie Norman or Jennifer Foote, RN.

Return the forms to us by any of these methods:

- Mail to 323 S Mountain Ave #102, Springerville, AZ 85938.
- Give the forms to your school nurse.
- Drop the forms off at our office in Springerville (323 S. Mountain Ave) or in St. Johns (75 W Cleveland St. Floor 2R)
- Fax the forms to 928-333-5876.

You will be entered into a free drawing for a Nintendo Wii!!!

Because getting vaccines is very unpleasant for both parents and children, we are sweetening the deal by entering each child that participates in this campaign into a free drawing for a Nintendo Wii. So please fill out the attached permission slip and health screening, complete with your insurance information and get it to the public health office by any of the methods listed above to be entered in the drawing!

Conclusion:

By vaccinating the children in our community we can greatly reduce the spread of seasonal flu and prevent flu in our kids. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this public health campaign. Our office is available to answer questions or assist with the forms. Please let us know what we can do to help.

Best health,

Elizabeth Kizer, MS
Apache County Health Director