



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY  
**Health Department**

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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Health officials stress H1N1 flu prevention**

**Helena** – Cases of H1N1 flu, also known as swine flu, have increased in the last week, according to the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department. H1N1 was already circulating in the county, but now that summer vacation is over and kids are back in school, there is more opportunity for it to spread. “Despite predictions that H1N1 may hit hard this winter, there is no reason to panic,” said Mike Henderson, RN and Disease Control and Surveillance Administrator for the Health Department. “Instead, people should focus on prevention methods, such as hand washing, covering a cough and staying home from work and school when sick.”

The US Department of Health and Human Services predicted last month that 30 to 50 percent of the population could contract swine flu, which could cause 30,000 to 90,000 deaths. “These predictions need to be taken with a grain of salt,” Henderson said. “We can protect ourselves if we keep simple prevention measures in mind.”

**Wash your hands often with soap and warm water**, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based gel hand cleaners are also good to use, but only when soap and water is not available.

**Stay home when you are sick.** If you are sick, stay home and limit your contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others.

**Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze**, or sneeze into your sleeve. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. Then wash your hands.

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

**Use available disinfectant wipes** for shopping cart handles.

**Avoid close contact with sick people.** Information on how to care for sick family members is located at:  
<http://www.co.lewis-clark.mt.us/departments/health.html>

The Health Department expects to receive a limited supply of H1N1 vaccine in October. The vaccines are expected to be in short supply at first, but the department anticipates monthly shipments after the initial shipment arrives. While supplies are limited, the vaccine will be administered to high risk groups. “Younger people are targeted for the vaccine because flu strains similar to H1N1 have already moved through the population and may have provided immunity to older people,” Henderson said. Current studies indicate the risk for H1N1 infection among persons age 65 or older is less than the risk for younger age groups.

High risk groups include:

- Pregnant women;
- Household and caregiver contacts of children younger than 6 months of age;
- Health care and emergency medical services personnel with direct medical contact with patients or infectious materials;
- Children 6 months through 4 years old;
- Children with chronic medical conditions under 19 years of age.

"If we have enough vaccine for other groups, then we will use it — and as soon as we can," Henderson said. A second tier of those at higher risk includes:

- Children and adults 5 to 24 years of age;
- People 25 to 64 years old who have underlying medical conditions, and
- Other health care workers.

The H1N1 vaccine will be shipped to state and local health departments. The health department will distribute it to local medical clinics and hospitals.

"Distribution will be controlled because there will be a limited supply," Henderson said. "We want to make sure the people who need it most, get it."

The novel H1N1 vaccine is distinct from the seasonal flu vaccine. People should get a seasonal flu vaccine as soon as it's available.

For more information, call the H1N1 flu information line at 457-8904 or visit [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov) or [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) .

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*The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.*