

Broome County Health Department

Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive • Claudia A. Edwards, MS, Public Health Director



225 Front Street • Binghamton, New York 13905
(607) 778-3930 • Fax (607) 778-2838 • Website: www.gobroomecounty.com

September 9, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that children 6 months through 18 years of age, in addition to other groups of people, be vaccinated against the new H1N1 ("swine flu") influenza virus as soon as a vaccine becomes available. As you may have heard, this new influenza virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe and has caused hospitalizations in both adults and children. Because children do not have immunity to this virus, they have been most affected by it and are considered at high risk of infection. As the U.S. begins its fall and winter flu season, the CDC is concerned that this virus may cause more illness, which may be severe in some cases. Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease.

The Broome County Health Department strongly encourages vaccination of your child through their primary care physician as soon as possible once the vaccine becomes available. If this is not a viable option for you, the health department is working with your child's school to offer the new vaccine to children at school. School vaccination clinics will begin this fall. Your child's school will provide specific dates once vaccine is obtained. School officials will send you an informational packet which will likely be sent home with your child. This packet will contain information sheets about the disease and the vaccine as well as a form that you must sign to accept or refuse vaccination for your child. While vaccination is strongly recommended, it is not mandatory and will **not** be given to your child without your written consent.

Children are expected to need two vaccines spaced 3 weeks or more apart. There is no cost to you for this vaccine.

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the clinics, please call the Broome County Health Department's H1N1 Information Line at 607-778-3331, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please visit the CDC's novel H1N1 influenza web site at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents/ for special information for parents or the Broome County Health Department's novel H1N1 influenza web site at www.gobroomecounty.com/hd/flu. Additionally, your child's health care provider can answer your questions about the new H1N1 virus, and the need for your child to also be vaccinated against the seasonal influenza virus.

Sincerely,

Claudia Edwards
Public Health Director