

North Shore Technical High School Planning for School-Based Student H1N1 Vaccination Clinic

The H1N1 flu has been declared a Nationwide Public Health Emergency by the Center for Disease Control because of how quickly the H1N1 virus is spreading. The H1N1 virus is spreading quickly because most people, including school-aged children, have no immunity to the H1N1 virus. The H1N1 virus has already been taking a toll on the Northeastern United States.

Tri-Town (Boxford, Middleton and Topsfield) Board of Health agents have been working with the North Shore Technical High School (NSTHS) Administrators and the School Nurse to offer students the H1N1 vaccination in school. School-aged children have represented 60% of those who are sick with H1N1 flu. Of the school-aged children who have been sick with H1N1 flu, 18% have been hospitalized for complications and serious illnesses related to the H1N1 flu.

H1N1 vaccination is the best way to protect children and adults from getting sick with the H1N1 flu. As additional vaccines become available, the local health agents and school administration want to be prepared to offer the H1N1 vaccine to students in the NSTHS. This week, consent form packets will be sent to all parents/guardians with students in the NSTHS. The consent forms will ask each parent/guardian to give permission for their child to receive the H1N1 vaccination in school without a parent/guardian present. Parents are able to decline consent on the form as well. **All** consent forms will need to be returned to the NSTHS School Nurse by November 12th. Please visit the NSTHS website for additional information.

High school students only require one dose of the H1N1 vaccine. The H1N1 vaccine is developed in the same way that the seasonal flu vaccine has been developed for decades. It has been studied extensively over the last several months and has been found to be safe in children and adults. You cannot get the H1N1 flu by receiving the H1N1 vaccination.

Those who have already been sick with H1N1 flu are still recommended to get the H1N1 flu vaccine this year. Studies have shown that having the H1N1 flu only provides a partial immunity response to the H1N1 virus and that these people need to receive the H1N1 vaccine for full protection.

Vaccinating children in school has been recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Center for Disease Control. The focus is to provide as many school-aged children with the H1N1 vaccine in order to protect them from the H1N1 flu and having serious complications from the H1N1 flu. By receiving the H1N1 vaccine, school-aged children will also be able to reduce the spread of H1N1 flu which will protect their schoolmates, family members, and can especially to protect those around them who are also at high-risk from the disease including: pregnant women, infants less than six months, those with chronic health conditions and those with weakened immune systems.

The MDPH recommends that people call their health care provider to see if they or their child can receive the H1N1 vaccination in their office. Health care providers have been the first to receive allotments of H1N1 vaccine and may be able to offer vaccination sooner than the health agents. Please call your child's health care provider if you have further questions about the H1N1 flu and the H1N1 vaccine.

To look for seasonal and H1N1 vaccination clinics being held in your area, go to <http://flu.masspro.org/clinic/> where you can put in your zip code and perform a search. Seasonal flu vaccine is still recommended for all residents.

Please visit the following websites for additional information:
<http://www.flu.gov/> or <http://mass.gov/flu>