

# RUTHERFORD POLK MCDOWELL HEALTH DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

## RUTHERFORD HOSPITAL ANNOUNCEMENT

"RHI Announces Limited Visitation"

Due to the rising number of flu cases in the region and throughout North Carolina, Rutherford Hospital is asking the public to help prevent the spread of flu within the hospital by limiting visitation:

\* Children and teens are asked not to visit the hospital at all, because of the high rates of H1N1 flu among younger people.

\* Adult visitors should be limited to the patient's immediate family or the patient's designated caregiver.

\* People who do not feel well should not visit the hospital at all.

\* Those who do visit are asked to use good cough etiquette - cough or sneeze into a tissue or into the elbow, NOT into the hand.

\* Wash hands thoroughly before and after visiting.

NOTE: The request also applies to pastors visiting members of their faith community, except in end-of-life and critical situations."

## RPM HEALTH DISTRICT

### Seasonal Flu Vaccine VS Novel H1N1 Vaccine Priority Groups

There will be two different flu vaccines this year. The Novel H1N1 flu is affecting individuals in larger numbers in certain groups that contrast with the traditional Seasonal Flu affected groups. A comparison of these priority groups, in no particular order, is as follows:

#### Novel H1N1 Flu PRIORITY GROUPS

- **Pregnant women**
- **Household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age**
- **Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel**
- **All people from 6 months through 24 years of age**
  - **Children from 6 months through 18 years of age**
  - **Young adults 19 through 24 years of age**
- **Persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.**

## SEASONAL FLU PRIORITY GROUPS

- **Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday**
- **Pregnant women**
- **People 50 years of age and older**
- **People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions**
- **People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities**
- **People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:**
  - **Health care workers**
  - **Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu**
  - **Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)**

Due to the differences in the demographics of the affected individuals a person may be eligible for the seasonal vaccine, but initially, not the Novel H1N1 vaccine and vice versa. After all of the priority groups for the vaccines have been reached and vaccinated, then other groups may begin to be vaccinated.

One of the most noticeable differences is in the age ranges affected. Novel H1N1 affects mostly young individuals, 24 years old and younger. This makes them a priority group for Novel H1N1 vaccine. Individuals age 65 and older are not in the priority group for the Novel H1N1 vaccine because the research shows that this group is not being affected as dramatically by the Novel H1N1 flu. In contrast to that, healthy people age 20 to 49 are not a priority group for the seasonal vaccine.

The vaccines being dispensed will initially target the groups most affected and vulnerable to that particular flu.

There are some groups of individuals who should not be vaccinated without consulting with their physician first. Some of these groups include:

- **People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.**
- **People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination.**
- **People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine.**
- **Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for this age group), and**
- **People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated.)**

For these groups and everyone else, one of the best defenses' is prevention. One of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease is through proper hygiene and sanitation.

### **Flu Prevention Focus: Hand-Washing**

How often do you wash your hands? The answer for most people is, probably not enough.

Keeping your hands clean is one of the most important steps, and the easiest, you can take to prevent getting sick and spreading germs.

You should wash your hands with soap and clean running water for at least 20 seconds.  
(Sing the Happy Birthday Song while washing.)

If soap and water are not available a alcohol based sanitizer product (at least 60 % concentration) is effective for sanitizing your hands.

### **When Should You Wash Your Hands?**

- Before preparing or eating food
- After going to the bathroom
- Before and after changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has gone to the bathroom.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After handling an animal or animal waste
- After handling garbage
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- Anytime your hands become dirty, soiled, or contaminated

### **Proper Hand Washing Procedure:**

1. Wet your hands with clean running water and apply soap. Use warm water if it is available.  
HINT: Before you begin, have a towel ready, or dispensed out and ready before you begin.
2. Rub your hands together to make a lather and scrub all surfaces, including the ; back of your hands, sides, and in between your fingers.
3. Continue scrubbing your hands for at least 20 seconds. Instead of counting to twenty, you can sing the “Happy Birthday “ song to yourself twice.
4. Rinse all surfaces of your hands thoroughly under running water.  
(Remember that towel that you got ready before you began.)
5. Dry you hands using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use the paper towel to turn off the faucet.

### **When using an alcohol based hand sanitizer:**

1. Apply the product to the palm of your hand.
2. Rub your hands together, sufficiently covering all surfaces.
3. Let the product air dry.

**NOTE:** Alcohol based sanitizers significantly reduce the number of germs on your skin, but they do not remove dirt and grime from your hands. Wash your hands with soap and water as soon as you can if they are dirty.

Please call your local health department office with any questions or for information.

For more information, and guidance for specific groups, please visit the following websites:

[www.cdc.gov/H1N1](http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1)

[www.flu.nc.gov](http://www.flu.nc.gov)

[www.rpmhd.org](http://www.rpmhd.org)

[www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov)

**Local Contacts:**

Phillip Melton, Interim Health Director (828) 287-6054

Helen White, District Clinical Supervisor (828) 287-6044

Kevin Rogers, Preparedness Coordinator (828) 925-0571

RPM Epidemiology Preparedness Infection Control Safety Team Contact E-mail: [rpmepi@rpmhd.org](mailto:rpmepi@rpmhd.org)

**Attachments:**

CDC Hand-washing Flyer

FLU View Week 35 Report