

SAN ■ JUAN ■ BASIN
HEALTH
D E P A R T M E N T

September 10, 2009

San Juan Basin Health Department would like to encourage you, as key members of the community, to partner with us to limit the negative impacts of what is anticipated to be a challenging flu season. In addition to the normal seasonal flu, we anticipate H1N1 flu outbreaks will occur, affecting individuals, businesses and the community in general.

H1N1 flu is similar to seasonal flu, with common symptoms being fever greater than 100 degrees, cough, sore throat and general aching joints. Unlike the seasonal flu, H1N1 flu is a new virus which means we have no natural immunity to protect us. Although it appears to have milder symptoms and be of shorter duration than seasonal flu for most people, it can be severe and even life threatening to some, especially those with underlying respiratory illness.

Employers can take a few simple steps now:

1. Utilize prevention posters that remind everyone to wash or sanitize hands frequently and to cough and sneeze into their sleeve (display in bathrooms, lunch or break rooms, and where they can be visible to the broader community, such as in a front window. See attached *Resources for Employers*.
2. Have tissues and hand sanitizer on the counter where customers and staff can easily access them.
3. Have a spray bottle handy to disinfect routinely items or counters that are touched frequently.
4. Encourage employees to stay home or go home when they are sick, and not to return to work until their temperature is 100 degrees or below without medication for 24 hours. Review your sick leave policies (see CDC Guidance for suggestions).
5. Support employees getting the H1N1 flu vaccine.
6. Begin preparing to function with a potential workforce shortage, including employees who are parents and may need to take care of sick children.

An excellent resource is the *CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond*, at www.cdc.gov/h1n1/business/guidance. Please see attached resource sheet we have compiled for you. Although San Juan Basin Health Department does not have the resources to meet with individual employers, we have and will continue offering general presentations for the business community.

We appreciate your assistance and support in protecting and promoting the health of our community.

Sincerely,

Lynn Westberg, Director
San Juan Basin Health Department