



## Health Department Reviews 2009 H1N1 Flu Response

For Immediate Release: March 4, 2010  
Media Contact: Communication Office  
Vermont Department of Health

BURLINGTON – Health Commissioner Wendy Davis, MD, celebrated the vaccination of nearly one-third of the state's population against the 2009 H1N1 influenza as a major public health achievement at a press briefing on Thursday – but also cautioned Vermonters to keep taking precautions to avoid catching the flu.

“This new flu has been highly unpredictable, from the time it was first identified in April just as the regular flu season was ending, through the peak of illness in November, and still now as illness seems to be waning but is not entirely gone,” Dr. Davis said.

“We’ve come a long way in protecting ourselves and each other over the past year, and we should take time to congratulate everyone who stepped forward to be vaccinated. But we still need to keep our guard up. If you haven’t been vaccinated yet, it’s not too late.”

As of Feb. 27 of this year, 195,898 doses of vaccine (shot or nasal spray) have been administered statewide.

A total of 149 Vermonters were hospitalized with flu-related illness and three people died during the outbreak. Vermont reported its peak of flu activity (widespread) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention between Oct. 18 and Dec. 5, 2009.

School vaccination clinics, which were completed on Feb. 19, were among the success stories of the H1N1 response, according to Dr. Davis. The age group with the highest number of individuals vaccinated were 5- to 18-year-olds, nearly 75,000 school-age Vermonters. Children under age 10 need two doses of vaccine for best protection, so most participating schools hosted two vaccination clinics, for a total of 270 first shot clinics and 200 second shot clinics.

“Schools are not organized to serve as vaccination clinics and the response by the Department of Education, school leaders, nurses, teachers, staff and parents was outstanding,” Dr. Davis said. “We can be proud of our schools and how they came together to make sure our youngest and most vulnerable were protected.”

Dr. Davis also credited many other Health Department partners, both public and private, for their role in protecting Vermonters against the spread of flu. Key partners included UVM and the state's colleges, hospitals and health care providers statewide, Vermont Emergency Management, the Vermont National Guard, Vermont 2-1-1, and the Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies. The state's home health agencies and Visiting Nurses Associations organized 191 public health clinics to date, and continue to offer clinics in Rutland every Wednesday through March.

The Health Department also discussed challenges faced during the outbreak. Although 2009 H1N1 vaccine was produced six months after the new flu was first identified in April 2009, a shortage of vaccine early on as manufacturers raced to distribute the shots and nasal spray resulted in postponements or long lines at some clinics.

The state continues to have a strong supply of H1N1 vaccine and will offer free shots and the nasal spray by appointment, for anyone over 6 months of age at the 12 Health Department District Offices.

Information on H1N1 precautions everyone should take are available at the Health Department's website: [www.healthvermont.gov](http://www.healthvermont.gov) or by dialing 2-1-1. You can follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/healthvermont>

###

