



**CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
NEW SOUTH WALES**

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10 November 2009

(Ref: 367/09)

MEMORANDUM TO: Diocesan Directors
Principals of Congregational Schools

FROM: Ian Baker

SUBJECT: **H1N1 Swine Flu – NSW Health Vaccinations**

Attached is a document from NSW Health regarding Pandemic Influenza vaccinations. NSW Health have asked that the document be made available on diocesan and congregational school websites and sent home with students in high schools. At this stage, they are not focussing on primary school students.

If there are any questions about this matter, please contact Tony McArthur on 02 9287 1533 or by email: tony.mcarthur@cecsw.catholic.edu.au .

Pandemic influenza vaccination available for children aged ten years and over

NSW Health reminds parents and caregivers that a vaccination for pandemic influenza A (H1N1), also called swine flu, is available for **children aged ten years and over**. The vaccine is available **free** from your general practitioner or Aboriginal Medical Service, although your doctor may charge a consultation fee.

Pandemic influenza activity peaked in July in NSW and levels of disease are now at levels expected for this time of the year, however cases are still occurring occasionally. The Northern Hemisphere is reporting high levels of activity. Parents should consider the increased risk which may present over the holiday season by travelling to areas overseas where pandemic influenza is very common and by contact with overseas visitors.

The vaccine has undergone trials to test its safety and how well it works and has been registered by the Therapeutic Goods Administration. The vaccine requires one dose in those aged ten years and over, delivered by injection into the upper arm. Vaccinations for children under aged ten years are expected to be available in late November or early December.

Who should get the vaccination?

Anyone aged ten years and over who wishes to be protected from pandemic influenza can be vaccinated. It is especially important that people at increased risk of severe illness from influenza, and those who care for them, are vaccinated. This includes:

- Pregnant women
- People who are very overweight
- People with chronic medical conditions including:
 - chronic kidney or liver or lung disease (including asthma)
 - chronic heart conditions
 - blood disorders (including sickle cell disease)
 - neurological disorders
 - metabolic disorders (including diabetes)
 - weakening or suppressed immune systems (may be caused by cancers, medications for HIV/AIDS)
- Healthcare workers
- Community care workers or family carers providing direct care to vulnerable groups
- People living in remote or isolated communities
- Carers of children 0-6 months of age.

During this pandemic Aboriginal people have been more likely to develop severe illness from influenza. For this reason vaccination is highly recommended for Aboriginal people, particularly those who are in one or more of the risk groups listed above.

Who should NOT get the vaccination?

Some people should **not** have the vaccination. This includes people who:

- have a severe allergy to eggs
- have had anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) following any vaccine component
- have had anaphylaxis following a previous dose of any influenza vaccine.

More information about the vaccine is available from NSW Health's swine flu website:

<http://www.emergency.health.nsw.gov.au/>.

Please read this information to make an informed decision about vaccinating your child.