

S4 Prevent another 'wave' of H1N1

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CDC RECOMMENDS GETTING VACCINATED TO LESSEN THE CHANCES OF SPREADING VIRUS

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South Heartland District Health Department has ample H1N1 vaccinations available to be administered in the coming weeks free to residents of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties.

Jim Morgan, public health risk coordinator at South Heartland, is hoping area residents will take full advantage of the current availability in light of the looming threat of another H1N1 outbreak in the coming months.

"There's nothing to say that it will absolutely go back up, but there's a chance that it could," Morgan said Tuesday. "Since last April it's down considerably, but sometimes when you get into the bottom part of the wave, it can come in again. If you are vaccinated, the chances of it going up will be down just because there will be more people who won't get the illness.

"It's just a matter of persuading the public of the need to take it. We really don't want the public to wait because the numbers could go up again at any time from the last part of January into early February."

Waiting until the virus resurfaces is also not a good idea, considering it takes about 10 days for the vaccine to take full effect in adults. For children 9 years of age through six months, a sec-



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Bill Saathoff receives a H1N1 vaccination from registered nurse Adene Maronde of Osceola Dec. 30, 2009, at the Adams County Fairgrounds.

ond dose given a month after the first is needed before the vaccination can take full effect.

The vaccinations are available both by injection and nasal spray mist, Morgan said. Because the mist spray comes in a weakened attenuated form — mean-

ing it contains a live weakened form of the virus — it is only available to healthy individuals, ages 2-49. Pregnant women are also prohibited from receiving the vaccination in nasal form.

"The nasal spray is really popular with the grade school kids,"

Morgan said. "Of course, any time you don't have a needle kids like that. In high school, though, they'd rather have the needle."

To date, South Heartland has received about 19,000 doses of the vaccine. About 14,000 have

been distributed to area hospitals and clinics, with an additional 5,000 still on hand for local distribution, Morgan said.

More than 700 people lined up for shots at the free clinic hosted by South Heartland on

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H1N1: Getting vaccinated can prevent spread of virus

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Dec. 30 at Adams County Fairgrounds. Morgan said he expects about the same draw at a follow-up clinic from 3-8 p.m. Jan. 20 at the fairgrounds.

To date, it does not appear the H1N1 virus has mutated, meaning the current vaccination will greatly reduce the chance of contracting the virus, Morgan said.

"One of the things we're looking at is whether or not the virus has developed some resistance," he said. "So far, it has not from what we've been able to tell. It's pretty well staying the same at this time, which is good news."

Shelly Boden, coordinator of Central Nebraska Medical Reserve, is responsible for rounding up volunteers to administer

the vaccinations and perform other duties as needed. Boden said CNMR recruits health care volunteers from the 17 hospitals and four public health districts within its 23-county region.

Boden says residents with concerns about whether they should receive the vaccination should consult their local family provider before proceeding. Barring underlying health prob-

lems, most individuals are eligible to receive the vaccine in both its forms, she said.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Washington recommends receiving the vaccination to lessen the likelihood of spreading additional cases.

It is difficult to say with any certainty just how many people have actually contracted the virus because the CDC ceased

reporting probable cases of H1N1 on July 24, 2009. A recent CDC report estimated that one in six Americans has had H1N1.

"It's a possibility we could see an upswing," Boden said Tuesday. "It's not too late to get the H1N1 vaccination. The CDC is saying we should still have the vaccination to prevent another wave in the spring. That's their fear."

Adene Maronde is a member of the Central Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps.