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News Release

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Health District Removes Restrictions for H1N1 Vaccine

BREMERTON — Effective Monday, December 14, 2009, the Kitsap, Clallam and Jefferson County Health jurisdictions will jointly remove all eligibility restrictions for the H1N1 vaccine in the three-county area. This means all persons wanting H1N1 vaccine will be eligible to receive it beginning Monday, December 14th.

This decision has been made for several reasons. Requests for vaccine among local health care providers and pharmacies have decreased in recent weeks. Also, at a free mass vaccination clinic on December 9th, the Health District, in partnership with the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), gave vaccinations to priority group members for whom cost or the lack of a medical home might be a barrier. Health District and DEM staff and volunteers vaccinated 570 persons during this event. Finally, the vaccine supply is expected to increase steadily in coming months.

To date 40,811 doses of H1N1 vaccine have been distributed to vaccinators in Kitsap County.

The second wave of H1N1 illness crested in late October and has been declining since November. A third wave is expected in late January or February. The Health District encourages all citizens to get vaccinated – for H1N1 flu as well as for the regular seasonal flu. Vaccination will reduce the chances of getting sick, will prevent spreading the flu to vulnerable

family members, friends and coworkers, and will help reduce the risk of community-wide illness. The only time it is too late to get a vaccination is when you actually become ill with that particular vaccine-preventable infection.

The H1N1 vaccine has been given to tens of millions of people nationwide. Reports of adverse reactions have been extremely low, far fewer than what is usually seen with seasonal flu vaccine. Most reported reactions have been very mild and limited to soreness at the injection site or minor and short-lived flu-like symptoms.

Kitsap County health care providers and pharmacies that have elected to be H1N1 vaccinators will continue to receive vaccine using the same processes that have been in place for weeks. People should call their health care providers to see if they are giving H1N1 vaccination. Alternatively, people can visit the Kitsap County Health District website at www.kitsapcountyhealth.com or call the Flu Line at 360-337-5240 for more information about vaccine availability.

The Health District will continue to monitor vaccine availability and vaccination rates to assess the need for free mass vaccination clinics for the general public and is committed to ensuring that barring vaccine supply disruption, all persons who want the vaccine can receive it.

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