

# RENSSELAER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

KATHLEEN M. JIMINO  
EXECUTIVE COUNTY



MARY FRAN WACHUNAS  
PUBLIC HEALTH DIRECTOR

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

There have been large outbreaks of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus in schools across the country. Nationally, the virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and deaths in adults and children.

Most schools within Rensselaer County are experiencing a similar spike in activity. Districts are reporting that both staff and students are showing signs and symptoms of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus. This 2009 H1N1 virus is the only flu virus circulating at this time. Although schools are reporting an increase in absenteeism, they are being advised to remain open as long as there is adequate staff available to provide daily operation. School closings will be a local decision between the school superintendent and the Rensselaer County Department of Health (RCDOH) based on current data.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease. The RCDOH is working with your child's school district to provide the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine at school. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has recommended that children and young adults aged 6 months through 24 years be vaccinated against the 2009 H1N1 virus as soon as the vaccine is available. Other groups recommended to get the first available doses of the vaccine include:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Health care and emergency medical services workers, and
- People ages 25 through 64 years who have certain health conditions such as HIV, diabetes, or heart or lung disease.

Children under the age of 10 are expected to need two doses of vaccine spaced approximately 28 days apart. The second dose will be offered if vaccine is available.

The RCDOH will hold vaccination clinics in schools as soon as vaccine is available, most likely by the end of November. Once the schedule is finalized, your child's school district

will advise you of the specific dates that the health department will host the clinic. Your school district will send you more information about the H1N1 influenza virus and vaccine as well as the parent/guardian consent form. These forms will allow you the option to either accept or refuse the vaccine for your child. This vaccination is *optional and will be of no cost to you*. In addition, your child's health care provider can also answer your questions regarding the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus or possibly provide the H1N1 vaccine for your child.

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, please go to the RCDOH website at [www.rensco.com](http://www.rensco.com). You can also visit the CDC's 2009 H1N1 influenza web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> or <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents> for more information.

Sincerely,  
Mary Fran Wachunas  
*Public Health Director*