



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

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HEALTH OFFICIALS TO FOCUS ON MINORITY VACCINATION

Minority Groups 2-3 Times More Likely to be Hospitalized with H1N1

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Health Services kicked off National Influenza Vaccination Week this week by calling on local public health departments to step up their H1N1 vaccination efforts in minority communities. DHS released a report showing that H1N1 hospitalizations for minority populations were higher in the 2009 fall outbreak.

“Based on these numbers it is clear that in addition to those with underlying health conditions, minorities should be considered a priority for vaccination efforts in 2010,” said State Health Officer Dr. Seth Foldy. “There are many factors that play into this trend, which exists in several communities in our state. That means that we need to use many different approaches to try and protect these communities prior to a possible third wave of influenza.”

In Wisconsin, the number of H1N1 hospitalizations per 100,000 population this fall was 40.2 among African Americans compared to 13.0 among Non-Hispanic whites, a 3.1-fold difference. Similar disparities existed for Native Americans who were 3.4 times more likely to be hospitalized, Hispanics who were 2.6 times more likely to be hospitalized and Asians who were 2.1 times as likely when compared to Whites.

Some explanations for this variation in hospitalization rates include:

- Wisconsin’s African-American and Hispanic populations are younger, on average, than non-Hispanic whites, with children and younger adults experiencing the highest rates of H1N1 infection.
- Wisconsin’s minority populations often have higher rates of diabetes, asthma, heart disease, and other conditions that are risk factors for severe influenza, which could increase their risk of hospitalization for H1N1 infection.
- Wisconsin’s minority populations may have less access to healthcare overall, which can result in less use of preventive antiviral therapy or in waiting until patients are sicker before seeing a medical provider.
- Lower vaccination rates historically mean that minority populations are less likely to seek vaccine.

DHS has been promoting the H1N1 vaccine to African-American, Hispanic and Hmong populations through English and foreign language radio ads. Additional advertising has recently been added to Native American radio programs and the Department is currently planning an additional campaign targeted specifically at minority populations.

Details from the report including specific numbers for some counties can be found at:

<http://www.flu.wisconsin.gov/mediaroom.asp?locid=106>

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