



WESTBROOK SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

October 6, 2009

As you may have heard, a new influenza virus, called the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, was first identified in the United States in late April 2009. The virus has caused illness ranging from mild to severe, including hospitalizations and deaths in adults and children. Many children have gotten 2009 H1N1 infection and there have been large outbreaks in some schools across the country. 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 2009 H1N1 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.

Vaccination is the best way to protect your child from this potentially serious disease. The state health department and VNA Home Health and Hospice are working with the Westbrook School Department to give the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine to children at school. We will hold vaccination clinics this fall, and we will let you know the specific dates once vaccine is on hand. We will send you a form that will include options allowing you to either accept or refuse the vaccination for your child. If you refuse, the vaccination will not be given to your child.

It's important not to confuse the H1N1 vaccination with the seasonal flu vaccination. We have already held seasonal flu vaccination clinics in all of our schools. Parents of children who are under the age of 9 will be contacted about the scheduling of the second dose of the seasonal flu vaccine in the next few weeks. Children who are 9 and over do not need a second shot.

Children are expected to need two doses of the H1N1 vaccine spaced about 3 weeks apart. There will be no cost to you for this vaccine.

If you have any questions about the vaccine or the vaccination clinics, please call your child's school nurse during regular school hours. You can also visit our web site at <http://www.westbrookschoools.org>, the CDC's 2009 H1N1 influenza web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/> and also <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/parents> for information especially for parents. Your child's health care provider also can answer your questions about the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus and will be able to give your child the seasonal influenza vaccine and may be able to give your child the 2009 H1N1 vaccine.

Sincerely,

Dr. Reza Namin
Superintendent of Schools