



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **North Georgia Health District now providing H1N1 vaccine to general public**

Dalton (GA) December 9, 2009 — The North Georgia Health District has now opened provision of H1N1 vaccine to the general public.

Health departments in Cherokee, Fannin, Gilmer, Murray, Pickens and Whitfield Counties will now provide the vaccine at no charge to the general population. However, an administrative fee may be charged through Medicare, Medicaid, and all third party insurance including State Health Benefit plans for United Health Care and CIGNA. Residents are asked to bring their insurance cards at the time of service. Service will be on a first-come, first-served basis until the current vaccine supply is depleted.

“We are still urging our residents within the high priority groups to get their H1N1 vaccination as quickly as possible while supplies last,” said North Georgia District Health Director Dr. Harold Pitts. “However, the demand for the vaccine from people in these groups has decreased and 19,000 doses of vaccine were shipped to our health departments last week. Therefore, we feel it is time to open this up to everyone.”

H1N1 vaccine doses were initially offered to five priority groups the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) determined were most at risk of developing complications from the virus:

- Pregnant women
- Health care and emergency medical personnel
- People who live with or care for infants younger than 6 months
- Anyone from 6 months to 24 years of age, and
- Anyone from 25 to 64 years of age who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk for influenza related complications

- more -

Although the pandemic seems to be slowing with fewer cases currently reported in Georgia and nationally, residents should remain on guard.

Dr. Pitts explained, “Pandemic outbreaks typically occur in a series of waves. Our concern is that holiday gatherings and travel will give the influenza virus a chance to infect more people and trigger another wave.”

While most people who catch H1N1 recover at home without medical treatment, this pandemic has claimed around 4,000 lives in the United States, including nearly 600 child fatalities, according to the CDC.

The public should also continue basic prevention methods that help keep flu and other contagious diseases from spreading:

- ❑ Practice good hand-washing hygiene. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ❑ Get your seasonal flu shot as soon as it becomes available.
- ❑ Cover coughs and sneezes.
- ❑ Stay home if you are sick. Keep sick children at home.

More H1N1 information is available by calling local county health departments (phone numbers are below), by going online to [www.nghd.org](http://www.nghd.org) or by dialing Georgia’s toll-free Flu Hotline at 1-888-H1N1-INFO (1-888-4161-4636).

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