
NEWS RELEASE

P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102



For Immediate Release:

Oct. 22, 2009

Contact:

Kit Wagar
Office of Public Information
573-751-6062

State health department issues exemption for flu vaccine

Action gives pregnant women and families of young children access to H1N1 vaccine

Missouri's top public health official granted an exemption Thursday to allow pregnant women and parents of children less than three years old to choose whether to receive flu vaccine containing a mercury-based preservative.

Margaret Donnelly, director of the Department of Health and Senior Services, determined that a shortage of preservative-free vaccine was preventing pregnant women and young children from obtaining the new H1N1 vaccine.

Donnelly's action temporarily sets aside a statute that prohibited pregnant women and children under three from receiving vaccine with this preservative.

The statute also allows the health director to set aside the ban in certain circumstances, including a pandemic or a shortage of vaccine. The waiver will remain in effect until the shortage no longer exists.

"The H1N1 flu is now widespread throughout Missouri," Donnelly said. "We know that pregnant women and young children are the most susceptible to this illness. But delays in vaccine production have created a situation where the most vulnerable people were left without vaccine protection."

Donnelly urged women and the parents of young children to consult their health care provider to determine whether any vaccine is appropriate for them.

Under the exemption, pregnant women and families of children younger than three years old will be able to decide whether to receive vaccines that contain small traces of mercury-based preservative.

#####