

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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An Open Letter to Alaska's Health Care Professionals:

As a physician and the director of Public Health in Alaska, I have made combating 2009 H1N1 influenza, or swine flu, my top priority. Like you, I recognize the importance of prevention. That's why I urge you to look after your patients by getting a seasonal flu shot now and a 2009 H1N1 vaccination as soon as possible.

As health-care workers, we all have a professional and moral duty to do everything we can to prevent the most vulnerable people in our communities from getting infected. That means getting immunized to stay healthy and stop the spread of disease. Simply put, we need to protect ourselves to protect our patients.

The seasonal flu shot is available now and the first shipment of the 2009 H1N1 vaccine will arrive this month. Weekly shipments will continue until everyone who wants the H1N1 vaccine can get it.

Health-care workers belong in the front of the line for immunization for 2009 H1N1. The other four priority groups include pregnant women, anyone who lives with or cares for children younger than 6 months, anyone age 6 months to 24 years, and adults 25 to 64 years old who have chronic health conditions.

As we head into winter, Alaska's health care professionals need to support our patients and colleagues by getting informed, being prepared and staying as healthy as possible. Please get vaccinated as soon as you can and stay home if you develop symptoms of the flu. We need you on the front lines, but not if you're sick. If you get severely ill or are at high risk for flu complications, contact your own health-care provider right away.

All of us can make a difference when fighting the flu, but health-care providers play an especially vital role

Please contact me for more information and guidelines, or go to our Web site at www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ward B. Hurlburt".

Ward B. Hurlburt, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Division of Public Health
Chief Medical Officer, State of Alaska