

FOR RELEASE

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Changes Announced to 2009 Seasonal Flu Vaccination Program

WHITEHORSE – Yukon’s Medical Officer of Health (MOH), Dr. Brendan Hanley, today announced that the Yukon will join several other jurisdictions in providing a focused seasonal flu vaccination before launching an intensive public H1N1 vaccination program later this year.

“Traditionally Yukon has offered the seasonal flu vaccination to any Yukon citizen who wished to protect themselves against the flu. This year, we are limiting the vaccine program to Yukon residents 65 years of age and older, and individuals in long-term care facilities,” Hanley added.

“This is about getting the right vaccines to the right people at the right time,” Hanley said. “Seniors and long-term care facility residents are at low risk for H1N1 but at the greatest risk of becoming seriously ill with seasonal flu. We believe this is the most effective use of the vaccine at this time. By targeting our seniors and long-term care residents, we are protecting those who are most at risk for seasonal flu.”

The seasonal flu vaccine will be offered to Yukoners 65 years and older and long-term care residents in early October.

The H1N1 vaccine is expected to be available to all Yukoners in November. The MOH said that H1N1 is expected to be the main flu circulating this year and some Canadian studies are also showing a potential link between prior seasonal flu vaccinations and an increased risk of getting an infection with the H1N1 virus.

Hanley also reiterated the simple messages that form part of this year’s health education campaign: “We can’t say it often enough – cough into your sleeve, wash your hands, clean common surfaces and most importantly – if you are ill, stay home.”

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