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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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H1N1 and Breastfeeding

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has named groups of people who are at a high risk of developing serious complications from H1N1 Influenza. In keeping with last month's release on pregnant women, the Sedgwick County Health Department will continue to send monthly releases focused on different subgroups. Currently, one of the highest-priority groups is infants under six months of age. One question that may come to mind is how should a mother feed her infant if she or her baby has H1N1?

To help prevent the spread of H1N1 from mother to baby, the CDC recommends that a breastfeeding mother:

- Wash her hands with soap and water before breastfeeding the baby (use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if no soap or water is available)
- Try not to cough or sneeze in the baby's face
- Try to find another family member to care for the baby while mom is sick
- Consider wearing a facemask for added protection to her baby

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Babies benefit from breast milk in many ways, including developing the ability to fight infection. According to the CDC, babies who are not breastfed get sick from infections, such as the flu, more often and more seriously than babies who are breastfed. It is very important for a mother who has contracted H1N1 to continue breastfeeding. This allows antibodies to be passed from the mother to her baby and will help the baby's developing immune system. If a mother becomes too sick to breastfeed, she should pump her milk and have a family member or caregiver give the baby the expressed milk.

If a mother is on antiviral flu medications she should pump her breast milk and have a family member or caregiver feed the baby the expressed milk. If a mother is taking medicine to prevent the flu, because she has been exposed to the virus, she should continue breastfeeding as long as she does not have symptoms such as fever, cough, or sore throat.

If a baby has contracted H1N1, the mother should continue breastfeeding. This is the best way for the baby to get the vital fluids he or she needs during the illness. If a baby is too sick to breastfeed, the mother should pump her breast milk and feed it to the baby via a cup, bottle, syringe or eye-dropper.

Wednesday, October 28, the Sedgwick County Health Department received some doses of the H1N1 vaccine and opened their East Harry Vaccine Clinic to pregnant women. The stock of H1N1 shots was depleted on Friday, October 30. Mothers and other caregivers of infants six months of age or younger should continue to watch, read and listen to the local media for information on when they are eligible to be vaccinated. Also, stay up to date on vaccination plans by visiting www.sedgwickcounty.org. A fact sheet on vaccines is available at this site. Call 660-5558 with H1N1 questions or e-mail flu@sedgwick.gov.

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