

HEALTH MATTERS

School Nurses Key in H1N1 Epidemic

But some districts lack resources

(AP) -- As schools grapple with a resurgence of swine flu, many districts have few or no nurses to prevent or respond to outbreaks, leaving students more vulnerable to a virus that spreads easily in classrooms and takes a heavier toll on children and young adults.

The shortage of school nurses could lead to more students falling ill from the H1N1 virus, which can be particularly dangerous for children with weakened immune systems or respiratory conditions such as asthma, experts say.

When the swine flu emerged last spring, it was a school nurse in New York City — Mary Pappas at St. Francis Preparatory School — who helped identify and curtail the country's first major outbreak after she noticed large numbers of students complaining of high fevers and sore throats.

But many schools around the country don't have a medical professional who can quickly diagnose students and detect outbreaks.

A 2008 survey by the National Association of School Nurses found that only 45 percent of public schools have their own full-time nurse, an-



Rock Creek Elementary School nurse Nina Fekaris shows first-grader Ian Bak how to wash his hands. Many school districts have few or no nurses to prevent or respond to H1N1 flu outbreaks, leaving students more vulnerable to a virus that spreads easily in classrooms. (AP Photo)

other 30 percent have a part-time nurse, and a quarter don't have any nurses at all.

With swine flu cases rising with the new school year, districts are depending on teachers, principals and secretaries with little medical training to identify, isolate and send home sick children, as well as monitor absences and illnesses for signs of a wider outbreak.

"We're asking so much more

of untrained staff as far as providing medical management," said Nina Fekaris, a nurse in the Beaverton School District who is responsible for four schools with 4,300 students. "It's putting our kids at risk."

Some teachers complain they haven't received guidance or training on how to deal with swine flu.

Since it was first identified in April, the swine flu has infected

more than 1 million Americans and killed nearly 600, the CDC estimates.

So far swine flu does not appear to be more dangerous than seasonal flu, which kills an estimated 36,000 Americans each year, but it appears to be more contagious and health officials are concerned that it could mutate and become deadlier.

Federal health officials are urging parents to have their kids



First-grader Emma, whose last name is omitted at parent's request, follows instructions on how to wash her hands at Rock Creek Elementary School.

vaccinated when the H1N1 vaccine becomes ready sometime in October.

In districts that have them, school nurses are developing plans to screen and quarantine sick students, teaching stu-

dents proper classroom hygiene, urging parents to keep ill children at home, organizing vaccination campaigns and instructing teachers and school staff how to identify sick students.

HIV Vaccine Gives Hope

(AP) -- For the first time, an experimental vaccine has prevented infection with the AIDS virus, a watershed event in the deadly epidemic and a surprising result. Recent failures led many scientists to think such a vaccine might never be possible.

The World Health Organization and the U.N. agency UNAIDS said the results "instilled new hope" in the field of HIV vaccine research, although researchers say it likely is many years before a vaccine might be available.

The vaccine — a combination of two previously unsuccessful vaccines — cut the risk of becoming infected with HIV by more than 31 percent in the world's largest AIDS vaccine trial of more than 16,000 volunteers in Thailand, researchers announced Thursday in Bangkok.

Even though the benefit is modest, "it's the first evidence that we could have a safe and



A researcher at the U.S. Military HIV Research Program.

effective preventive vaccine," Col. Jerome Kim told The Associated Press. He helped lead the study for the U.S. Army, which sponsored it with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The institute's director, Dr. Anthony Fauci, warned that this is "not the end of the road," but he said he was surprised and very pleased by the out-

come. "It gives me cautious optimism about the possibility of improving this result" and developing a more effective AIDS vaccine, Fauci said. "This is something that we can do."

Children's Tylenol Recalled

(AP) - Johnson & Johnson's McNeil unit is voluntarily recalling 57 lots of infants' and children's liquid Tylenol products because of possible bacterial contamination.

The products being recalled were made between April and June and include nearly two dozen varieties, including Children's Tylenol Suspension 4 oz. Grape, Infants' Tylenol Grape Suspension Drops 1/4 oz.

and Children's Tylenol Plus Cold/Allergy 4 oz. Bubble Gum. Consumers with questions should call McNeil's consumer call center at 1-800-962-5357.

Men's Health Project Men's Health Forum

"Staying Healthy for Ourselves and Our Families"

- Tuesday September 8, 2009
- Tuesday October 13, 2009
- Tuesday November 10, 2009

Time 6-8 PM

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HEALTHWATCH

Parenting Classes -- Newborns don't come with instruction manuals but parents and parents-to-be can learn about a variety of topics from pain and childbirth to breastfeeding to infant CPR and much more. For schedule of events, call 503-574-6595 or visit: providence.org/classes.

Mammography Screening -- Early detection is a key factor in the prevention of breast cancer. Call 503-251-6137 to schedule your high-tech, soft-touch mammogram.

Heart Talk Support Group -- Meets on the second Monday of each month; from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 503-251-6260.

Beating Breast Cancer -- Health experts at Providence offer free seminars on how nutrition and exercise choices can reduce risk and improve survival from breast cancer. Visit providence.org/integrativemedicine.

Bereavement Support Groups -- Free, safe confidential group meetings for those who have experienced the death of a loved one offered on various nights and locations. For info and regis-

tration, call 503-215-4622.

Cancer Resource Center -- Providence St. Vincent Medical Center and the American Red Cross have joined forces to create the first in-hospital resource center providing books, printed material, computer access and more for individuals and families dealing with cancer. The center is open Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lead Poisoning Prevention -- Learn how to protect your family from lead poisoning. Ideal for folks in live in older homes with children or pregnant women. Qualified participants receive a free kit of safety and testing supplies. Call 503-284-6827.

Family Caregiver Support Group -- This topic-oriented group offers a safe place to discuss the stresses, challenges and rewards of providing care to an older relative or friend. Meets the first Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at Legacy Good Samaritan Hospital.

Chronic Pain Support Group -- Meets the first Wednesday at 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and the third Wednesday of each month, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 503-256-4000.

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