

Flu vaccine running out



By Kathryn Reed

Roll up your sleeve fast, El Dorado County is just about out of flu vaccine – the regular flu shot, not the H1N1 concoction.

“We’re hoping we’ll get more vaccine, but all counties are in the same boat. There was a larger turnout than last year,” said Cathy Dunbar, immunization coordinator with El Dorado County Public Health.

Flu vaccination clinics are being canceled because the supplies are not available.

Dunbar said the county’s allocation is based on last year’s numbers. The problem is the demand is greater this year, not that the supply is less.

She believes the awareness of the swine flu is leading people to want to be vaccinated against the regular flu.

This may mean fewer sick people out and about because more people have been immunized. Only time will tell if people who didn’t get a shot will storm clinics and emergency rooms this year fearing what they have is more serious than the basic flu.

Barton Memorial Hospital is also running out of vaccine for the seasonal flu – and it ordered more than it had a year ago. The number of doses Barton had at the start of the season or what’s left was not available late Monday.

County officials did not have figures either.

Barton vaccinates all students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District who want it – which in the past has been 65 percent of the population. Barry Keil, director of pharmacy for the South Shore health care system, requested more vaccine this year in anticipation of more people wanting a shot.

Still, Barton, like the county, is canceling flu clinics because the supplies can't meet the demand.

“At our last flu clinic on Friday at Stateline there were over 60 people there. That's a very high number for this time of year. Usually it's more like 40,” Barton spokeswoman Denise Sloan said.

By this late in the fall, the number of people seeking out that needle usually tapers off.

Remaining seasonal flu clinics:

Barton will have one more seasonal flu clinic. It is Nov. 14 from 9am-1pm in the Barton Cafeat Barton Memorial Hospital, South Lake Tahoe. Cost is \$20, free with a Medicare card. Shots will be given until supplies run out.

El Dorado County Public Health has one more clinic in South Lake Tahoe. It is Nov. 10 from 9:30am-12:30pm at the Senior Center, 3050 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

How much swine flu vaccination will be coming to the county is not known. Dunbar said the first shipment arrived – the baby mist and that the county is waiting for the next shipment.

As of Monday, Barton had not received its first shipment of the H1N1 vaccine. It's expected to arrive any day. Schoolchildren and health care workers will be first in line for it because as they are the groups most at-risk.

Officials in El Dorado County are not as worried about the swine flu as their colleagues in Sacramento County. The Board of Supervisors there is expected today to discuss declaring a

state of emergency because of the rapid increase in H1N1 cases.

For more information about seasonal flu clinics or the H1N1 flu, go to www.edcgov.us/publichealth.