

Editorial: Swine flu vaccination ... protect yourself, your family

• Posted December 8, 2009 at 8:08 p.m.

With swine flu shot clinics finished in Southwest Florida schools — except for elementary tykes who need a second dose — health departments turn to the rest of us. Shots for most of the public at large beyond the high-risk groups are now available.

Please check this newspaper in print and online at naplesnews.com for times and places of those public clinics.

As of Tuesday, the Collier County Health Department had these clinics planned:

* North Collier Regional Park Exhibit Hall, Livingston Road: Monday and Dec. 19, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

* Former Kmart at Freedom Square, U.S. 41 East: Tuesday and Dec. 18, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Seasonal vaccine will also be available, and people can get both shots at the same time.

Lee County's health department plans a clinic on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Estero High School for swine flu shots only.

Starting Monday, the Lee health department will offer shots to walk-ins at its North Fort Myers branch, 83 Pondella Road, on weekdays. Collier is not yet planning to serve walk-ins.

Although the first winter wave of swine flu seems to have largely come and gone, with results milder than expected, the disease is still out there. Some medical authorities believe the next time the swine flu comes around, it will do so with a vengeance.

We look at these extended service clinics as a second chance for the majority of parents who declined for whatever reason to have their children inoculated at schools.

There is no need to remind families of how suddenly some children can get very, very sick and even die. We have already chronicled those sad, local stories.

One more thing to remember: the traditional, seasonal flu is out there, too. People ought to be vaccinated against that and the swine flu to be as protected as possible.

Meanwhile, to the dedicated staffs of the health departments administering these shots: Please be clear and careful with public notices. The other day at an at-large clinic in North Naples, an electronic billboard outside an outreach clinic summoned “targeted groups only.” Plus, at least for now the rules for the 65-and-over population differ from Collier to Lee. Collier is targeting seniors with conditions such as asthma and diabetes, while Lee seeks out all seniors — healthy and sick.

Any questions? See your doctor or call the health departments: in Collier, 252-8200 and press 2 or 0; in Lee,

461-6180.

Shots’ availability now moves from children, pregnant women and health-care workers to a larger population.

We hope everyone takes advantage of an immunization opportunity, or at least considers it.