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## AN OPEN LETTER TO IMMIGRANT NEW YORKERS ON H1N1 AND SEASONAL INFLUENZA

Dear Fellow New Yorker:

Flu season has arrived in New York City, with the return of H1N1 influenza ("swine flu"). Before the winter is over, the city may experience ordinary seasonal influenza as well.

Mayor Bloomberg has developed a plan to fight influenza and safeguard the health of all NYC residents, regardless of their immigration status or health insurance coverage. Here is some information that can help you protect yourself and your family:

- Remember that healthcare is available to everyone in New York City. You should not be afraid to visit a doctor, clinic or hospital. Your immigration status will not keep you from getting vaccinated or treated for influenza. Your medical care is confidential by law.
- To prevent influenza, some people will need two different vaccinations this year: one for seasonal flu and one for H1N1. To learn who needs these vaccines, and find out where to get them, please call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/flu](http://nyc.gov/flu).
- The City of New York is offering H1N1 vaccination for elementary school students during December. If you want your child to get vaccinated at school, you must complete and return consent and screening forms when your child brings them home. Parent coordinators from the Department of Education can help parents with this.
- During December, the City is also holding free weekend vaccination clinics in all five boroughs. Call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/flu](http://nyc.gov/flu) for dates and locations. These clinics are for:
  - ✓ Pregnant women
  - ✓ Anyone 4 years through 24 years of age (no children under 4)
  - ✓ Anyone 25 through 64 years of age who has an chronic health condition that makes influenza more dangerous
  - ✓ Anyone who lives with or cares for children less than 6 months old
- Besides getting vaccinated, you can take other steps to protect yourself and others from influenza.
  - ✓ Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Use a sleeve or a tissue (not your hand).
  - ✓ Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
  - ✓ Don't get too close to people who are sick.
  - ✓ If you come down with influenza, stay home until your fever is gone.
- Most people quickly recover from flu on their own, but the illness can be serious, especially if you are pregnant, elderly or experiencing other health problems. Here are some things to remember if you develop a fever with cough or sore throat.
  - ✓ Go to a hospital right away if you have an emergency, such as difficulty breathing. If the illness is not an emergency, a hospital is *not* the best place to seek treatment. Call 311 for other alternatives.
  - ✓ Call a doctor if you are pregnant or you have a chronic medical condition such as heart disease, immune deficiency, diabetes, or severe asthma.
  - ✓ If you aren't sure what to do, and you want to speak to a nurse, please call 311. Information and services are available in all languages.

Please feel free to share this information through any organization or website that can reach people who should know about the City's influenza services. Thank you very much.

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