

Schools get H1N1 shots

Murdock Middle first in district offered vaccinations

By PAMELA STAIK STAFF WRITER

CHARLOTTE COUNTY — Students and staff members in Charlotte County Public Schools will have the opportunity to receive free H1N1 flu vaccinations this year, with the first inoculations scheduled to be given out today at Murdock Middle School.

So far 468 students and staff members at the school have submitted permission forms for the voluntary vaccination, said Gail Buck, the district's health services supervisor. This includes sixth-graders who have opted to receive the regular flu vaccination, also free of charge.

Buck said the vaccinations will not contain the live virus, but rather the inactivated virus.

"It's like a deadened form of the virus," she said. "There's no way you'll get the flu from the shot, but it will help build up the antibodies to help ward off illness."

As for the other schools in the district, Buck said not to worry.

"We'll make it to every school," she said. "The goal is to reach schools when we have the appropriate doses for the school's enrollment and age levels to make sure we will have enough vaccinations. We know there's going to be another spike — another wave — of this virus coming through the area, and we want to try to keep our students as safe as possible."

While it may seem slow for parents, Buck said it's better than the alternative that many districts are facing in opening clinics countywide and running out of shots.

Next week, the Charlotte Harbor Center, The Academy at Charlotte Technical Center, Liberty Elementary School and students associated with the HOPE and Pumpkin Patch programs will be offered the swine flu vaccinations.

As for the other schools, parents and guardians are asked to monitor the information their children are bringing home from school to find out exact dates of the optional inoculations.

While it is hard to guess when every school will be reached, Buck said she hopes it will be by the end of the year.

"I would personally love to see this wrapped up by December, but it just depends on manufacturing and distribution," she said.

The shots will be administered at the school sites by staff members with the **Charlotte County Health Department**.

For more information about the student inoculations, visit <http://yourcharlotte schools.net>.

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