

# Hon Tony Ryall

Minister of Health



11 May 2010

Media Statement

## Seasonal flu vaccine doses top 900,000

The seasonal flu vaccination programme has seen more than 900,000 doses of vaccine distributed throughout the country.

Health Minister Tony Ryall says, "Including protection against the pandemic swine flu in the seasonal vaccine has driven this unprecedented demand."

"Last year there was a record 960,000 doses distributed and that took 30 weeks. This year it looks like we might reach that mark in 11 weeks. It has been a huge effort behind the scenes by DHBs, doctors, practice nurses and public health units."

"Most people are aware that this year's vaccine protects against the H1N1 (swine flu) strain, and all the publicity about the pandemic has prompted high demand. While last year's pandemic was mild for most, it was severe for some and over 1000 people were hospitalised," Mr Ryall says.

New Zealand didn't attempt a mass pandemic vaccination programme last year, so it was important to get the seasonal vaccine as early as possible, before the pandemic strain returned. New Zealand was the first country in the southern hemisphere to get the seasonal vaccine.

There is a continuing increase in the number of people calling HealthLine and visiting their doctor with flu symptoms as we approach the traditional flu season.

The amount of vaccine sent out so far is enough for more than 20% of the total population, and there are still plenty of supplies.

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