

Published Date: 09/09/2009

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DHHS Encourages NH Residents to Get a Yearly Flu Vaccine

Concord, NH – The annual influenza (flu) season is about to start and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is encouraging all residents to consider getting immunized against the flu, especially those who are at increased risk of complications from the flu. Influenza results in about 36,000 deaths annually and 200,000 hospitalizations.

“DHHS has just started shipping vaccine to providers for children who are served under our immunization program,” said Nicholas Toumpas, Acting Commissioner. “It’s important for people to consider getting a flu vaccine this year, especially if they are in one of the risk categories. Under our Vaccines for Children Program every child in New Hampshire can receive a seasonal flu vaccine free of charge at their healthcare provider’s office.”

Influenza is a very serious disease of the lungs, nose and throat. The illness is spread from person to person through coughing and sneezing. Typical flu symptoms include fever, headache, extreme tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, and muscle aches.

The flu season can last from October through May, so the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are encouraging people to be vaccinated whenever they can, even if it is after the initial push in the fall. The vaccine is available in the traditional shot form for people six months of age and older. Flu vaccine in a nasal mist form is available for people aged 2-49 years who are not pregnant.

“It is important to understand that the vaccine itself does not give you the flu and that it is very safe,” said Dr. Jose Montero, Director of Public Health. “It is especially important that certain targeted groups be vaccinated for their own safety, however other groups, such as health care providers, should receive the vaccine to protect others. If you won’t do it for yourself, get vaccinated for someone you care for or about.”

The at-risk groups that should receive a flu vaccine every year are:

Children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday

Pregnant women

People 50 years of age or older

People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, including asthma or heart disease, or those who are immune compromised

People who live with or care for those high risk of flu complications, including:

Health care workers

Household contacts of persons at high risk of complications from the flu

Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children younger than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated)

Those who should not be vaccinated are:

People with a severe allergy to chicken eggs

People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past

People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of previous influenza vaccination

Children younger than 6 months of age (the vaccine is not approved for that age group)

People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

For more information on influenza and the vaccine, contact the NH Immunization Program at 800-852-3345 ext. 4482 or 603-271-4482 or the Communicable Disease Surveillance Section at 800-852-3345 ext. 0279 or 603-271-0279. You can also visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov. For more New Hampshire information, visit the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov. To find a flu clinic close to you visit www.211nh.org or call 2-1-1.

