



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Influenza immunization recommended for those 6 months of age and older

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention encourage vaccination of all persons 6 months of age and older against influenza as soon as the vaccine becomes available. The flu is a very contagious respiratory illness, and the CDC states the best way to prevent flu is to get vaccinated each year.

“Every flu season is different, and we recommend you receive a flu vaccine regardless of whether you had one last year,” Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said. “The CDC warns that even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. An annual flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against this serious disease.”

Influenza vaccination is especially recommended for the following people who are at higher risk of influenza-related complications. These are the same groups for whom the immunizations were especially recommended last flu season.

- All children between 6 months and 5 years of age, but especially those between 6 months and 2 years of age
- Adults 50 years of age and older, especially those 65 years and older
- Adults and children with chronic disorders
- Pregnant women
- Children aged 6 months through 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Persons who are immunosuppressed
- Health care workers
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than age 5 and adults 50 years of age and older
- People who are morbidly obese (those with a body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or greater)

Anyone else who wishes to reduce the chance of contracting influenza should get a flu shot. A person with the flu may have some or all of these symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle aches and often extreme fatigue. Between 1976 and 2007, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the U.S. range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people each year. Approximately 90 percent of deaths occur in people 65 years and older.

The public is also reminded to follow basic infection control measures to help prevent the spread of the flu. These include covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or cloth when coughing and sneezing, washing hands frequently, and staying at home when sick.

Contact your private physician or your local county health department for a flu clinic schedule. For more information contact the Immunization Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health at (334) 206-5023 or toll free at 800-469-4599.

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