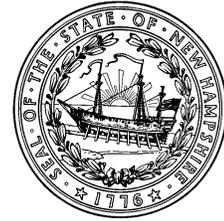


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Plenty of Seasonal Flu Vaccine Available to Anyone Over Six Months of Age

Concord, NH – The annual influenza (flu) season is about to start and the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) encourages all residents to consider getting immunized against the flu, especially those who are at increased risk of complications from the flu. An annual flu vaccine is the first and best way to protect against influenza.

“DHHS has begun shipping vaccine to providers for children who are served under our immunization program,” said Dr. José Montero. “The flu virus is always changing so it is important to be protected by yearly vaccination against this potentially deadly illness. Flu vaccine remains free for all children up through age 18 in New Hampshire.”

Influenza is a 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. An average of 22,000 people die each year in the United States due to influenza.

The flu season can last from October through May, so the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DHHS recommend that people be vaccinated whenever they can beginning today and any time through the end of the season. 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 healthy 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,” continued Dr. Montero. “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 following groups are at increased risk and should definitely receive a flu vaccine every year:

- 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

- more -

- People who live with or care for those at 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)

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. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov for more information or the DHHS website at www.dhhs.nh.gov. To get the flu vaccine, contact your healthcare provider or visit a local pharmacy.

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