



News for Immediate Release

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Departments of Health, Aging Encourage People to Get Flu Shots

National Influenza Vaccination Week is Dec. 4 - 10

Harrisburg –The state departments of Health and Aging are holding a series of events during National Influenza Vaccination Week, Dec. 4-10, to encourage people of all ages to get vaccinated against influenza.

The special week was established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to emphasize the importance of continuing influenza vaccination throughout the holiday season and into January. Historically, the number of people seeking flu shots begins to taper off after November.

“Vaccines are among the most successful and cost-effective tools available for preventing disease,” said Secretary of Health Dr. Eli Avila. “By increasing vaccination rates, we can fight the spread of influenza and help Pennsylvanians stay healthy during the holidays and into the New Year.”

Throughout the week, free flu clinics will be offered through the Department of Health’s 60 state health centers and the network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), as well as through other public and private partners. The Department of Health will also recognize health care organizations that have achieved superior vaccination rates in health care settings.

In the 2010-11 flu season, 19,190 influenza cases were reported to the Department of Health, with 21 percent of those cases involving people 65 and older. While influenza activity has been sporadic so far this season, it is highly contagious and can pose serious and life-threatening health risks, especially to older Pennsylvanians and young children.

“Fifty Pennsylvanians over the age of 65 died last year from influenza complications,” said Secretary of Aging Brian Duke. “Through Aging’s PrimeTime Health program, many of our Area Agencies on Aging offer flu shots at health clinics throughout the state. This partnership helps ensure older Pennsylvanians stay healthy through the flu season.”

Other groups at high risk for developing the flu include young children, pregnant women, anyone with chronic medical conditions and health care workers.

This year's seasonal influenza vaccine provides protection against three types of flu: 2009 pandemic H1N1, influenza A/H3N2 and influenza B. Flu season typically runs from October through May, and often peaks between January and March.

On average, five to 20 percent of the U.S. population develops influenza each year. Last flu season, there were 115 flu-related deaths reported nationwide in people younger than 18 years of age.

Individuals seeking vaccination from the Department of Health are encouraged to contact their local state health center for clinic hours or call 877-PA-HEALTH. Older Pennsylvanians are encouraged to contact their Area Agency on Aging, listed in the government section of local telephone directories.

For more information on seasonal influenza, contact your local health care provider or visit www.health.state.pa.us, where you will also find a list of free flu clinics being offered at state health centers across Pennsylvania.

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