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Florida Department of Health Urges Preparedness for Upcoming Flu Season
--Healthcare Providers should order flu vaccine for their patients and Floridians should schedule appointments for their flu vaccination now--

TALLAHASSEE-- Florida Department of Health (DOH) officials remind residents that it is not too early to prepare for the 2005 flu season. For months, DOH officials have called on private providers to order flu vaccine early to ensure sufficient supplies for all their patients. So far, DOH clinics have ordered nearly 340,000 flu vaccines for their clinic patients in the upcoming season. Most citizens are expected to receive their flu vaccine through their own doctor's offices or healthcare providers this year.

"It is critical that private providers seize this waning opportunity to order flu vaccine for their patients and clients. I urge Florida residents to call their doctors now to schedule a flu shot for later this year," DOH Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., said. "We were fortunate that flu season was relatively mild last year, but we can't let our guard down. Take steps now to make sure you and your private provider are prepared for this year's upcoming season."

DOH estimates that it facilitated the distribution of almost 2.67 million doses of flu vaccine in Florida over the 2004/2005 flu season. Nearly 252,000 of those flu shots were administered in DOH clinics around the state. The majority of flu vaccine was administered through private physicians, clinics, hospitals, long-term care facilities, community-based clinics and other public venues.

"To avoid standing in line schedule an appointment with your doctor now for a flu shot in October, November or December. That way, you'll know when you're getting your vaccine and your doctor will know how much to order," Agwunobi added.

In addition to vaccination, a number of simple steps can reduce the probability of contracting respiratory infections significantly:

- Clean hands often with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand cleanser.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick and keep sick children home.
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill, if possible.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

For information about how to schedule a flu vaccination, contact your private physician or local county health department. For more information on Flu and Flu vaccination, visit the DOH website at www.doh.state.fl.us and click on "Fight the Flu."

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