



For Immediate Release
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DOH ENCOURAGES FLORIDIANS TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO GET THEIR FLU VACCINE TODAY

-- Schedule an appointment with your primary physician now --

TALLAHASSEE – In preparation of the 2005 flu season, Florida Department of Health (DOH) officials urge Floridians, especially those 65 years of age and older, to make an appointment with their primary health care provider to receive a flu vaccine. Since flu season can begin as early as October, it is best to schedule an appointment now to ensure you are vaccinated later in the year.

“The best protection against flu is to get vaccinated every year. I strongly encourage Florida residents to call their doctors now to schedule a flu shot for October and November,” DOH Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H., said. “Getting vaccinated not only helps protect you from getting sick with the flu but it also helps protect others.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza-related deaths average 36,000 per year, mostly among the elderly. Influenza results in about 200,000 hospitalizations per year.

Prioritization of influenza vaccine has been implemented to ensure that enough vaccine is available for those at the highest risk for complications from influenza. CDC recommends that the following priority groups receive trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV) prior to the end of October whenever possible:

- persons aged 65 years and older with chronic medical conditions
- residents of long-term care facilities
- persons aged two-64 years with chronic medical conditions
- children aged six-23 months
- pregnant women
- health care personnel who provide direct patient care
- household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of persons in high risk population

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

Since prevention is the key to reduce the probability of contracting flu, here are practical steps to stop the spread of flu:

- 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 personal health care provider. For more information on Flu and Flu vaccination, visit the DOH Web site at http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/immune/flu/index.htm.

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